

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHORT STORY
IN GERMAN -

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE
POST-WAR PERIOD, 1945-65

BY
MURDOCH C. McDOUGALL

Ph.D.
University of Edinburgh
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CONTENTS

Introduction: The Structure of the Short Story	p. 1
Chapter 1: Historical Survey.....	
(a) Origins	9
(b) America	12
(c) Europe	26
Chapter 2: Germany.....	
(a) Attitude to America in 19th century	29
(b) <u>Novelle</u> and short story	34
(c) Historical development in the 19th century	45
(d) The earlier 20th century	54
Chapter 3: The Postwar Period.....	
(a) General	65
(b) The influence of Hemingway and Kafka	71
(c) The immediate postwar period	81
Chapter 4: The 1950's.....	
(a) General	114
(b) Heinrich Böll in the 1950's	121
(c) Secondary developments in the 1950's: Parable - Fantasy and Humour	131
(d) Gerd Gaiser	144
(e) The 'new' writers of the 1950's	166
Chapter 5: The 1960's.....	
(a) Recent Trends	190
(b) Modern forms and techniques: German views	203
(c) Observations on the short story today	231
Conclusion	245
Bibliography	249

INTRODUCTION : The Structure of the Short Story.

In the short story three elements are involved:

1. Content or theme
2. Form
3. Technique

Of these, the starting point must be theme or content. A writer, trained in observation, sees in the behaviour of the people around him some incident which catches his interest, some attitude which repels him, some act of generosity which calls forth his admiration. His imagination stimulated, he wishes to catch, record and highlight the emotions of the moment, possibly in order to point out some moral, or to amuse, or to arouse the crusading zeal of his fellows, or simply to gain political or financial profit.

How best is he to achieve this aim? How best can he present his material in order to produce the maximum effect?

Obviously, much will depend on the topic which he has chosen. Treatment of comedy must after all differ from treatment of tragedy; material which evokes in the mind's eye a clear, visual image demands a different presentation from that required by a theme of intellectual argument. The manner of presentation will depend on the talents, the imagination, indeed the character of the writer himself.

Form, being the shape of presentation, and technique, being the method of presentation, are therefore inextricably interdependent. Both however are decided only when the writer has already selected his theme or has worked out the content of his embryo story.

Fundamentally, the short story tends to conform to one of three basic

patterns or structures:

1. The Aristotelian form, which is the story-teller's natural sequence of a beginning, a middle, and an ending.
2. The picture-frame (cf Rahmennovelle) form, in which a setting is established, then the story is told within that setting e.g. Four elderly gentlemen are round a table in the Polo/Golf/Army-Navy/Yachting Club. Thunder rolls and rain splatters on the window-panes. "It was on just such a day as this that young Carruthers - you remember him? No? Well then..." There follows the narrative, with a final return to the scene at the club.
3. The 'dramatic' form, like a compressed 3-act play, in which the characters are introduced without preamble, already involved in a situation of problem or conflict. In the dénouement however the problem may be resolved, rejected, reversed or left 'open'.

Such is the structure of the short story. A broad outline of this kind is an essential starting-point for any study of short story development, and even more particularly in regard to German literature, where loose terminology and a strangely muddled assessment of the subject - one which until very recently was considered by German authors and critics alike as being somewhat unworthy - have produced a good deal of confusion, both of thought and of definition, which makes it essential to examine not only the existing definitions themselves, but also the reasons for the **very frequent** denigration of the short story as a form of literature at all.

In spite of the vast and international development of the short story in the nineteenth century, it was **given little attention** in Germany, so that even in the early part of the present century it apparently merits

only fleeting and often disparaging mention.

In 1906, R.M. Meyer defines the short story thus: 'Ich möchte sie definieren als einen Roman, der in die Form der Novelle zurückgedrängt ist.'⁽¹⁾

Hans Franck states simply and disdainfully: '... die Anekdote umfasst alle Arten der Kurzgeschichte...'⁽²⁾ while Martin Rookenbach dismisses it in passing: 'Die Kurzgeschichte ist ein 5-Minuten-Roman.'⁽³⁾

Hans Martin Elster, in the year 1930 entitles an article "Die Kurzgeschichte oder Skizze,"⁽⁴⁾ but in the same year Hans Heinrich Borchardt says in an article entitled "Anekdote": 'Viele der heute so beliebten Kurzgeschichten sind nur erweiterte Anekdoten.'⁽⁵⁾

In the year 1942, Robert Petsch⁽⁶⁾ in his terminology uses freely such terms as Kurzgeschichte, Kurzform, Kleinepik and even Novelle and Anekdote, in describing the same thing.

Wilhelm Schäfer dislikes the term 'Kurzgeschichte', calls his collection of short stories Anekdoten⁽⁷⁾ and says: 'Nur mit der Bezeichnung 'Kurzgeschichte' möchte ich meine Dinge verschont sehen..... Für alles, was nicht Fisch noch Fleisch ist, kommen wir im Epischen mit dem Begriff der Erzählung aus, mag sie kurz oder lang sein'.

(1) R.M. Meyer: Handbuch des Unterrichts an höheren Schulen, vol. 3, part 1, München, 1906, p.182.

(2) Hans Franck: Deutsche Erzählkunst, Trier, 1922, p.26.

(3) M. Rookenbach: "Kurzgeschichten", Wege nach Orplid, Band 15, München-Gladbach und Köln, 1926, p.1.

(4) Hans Martin Elster: "Kurzgeschichte oder Skizze" in Die Horen, 1930, p.708ff.

(5) H.H. Borchardt: "Anekdote" in Sachwörterbuch der Deutschkunde, 1930, p.133.

(6) Robert Petsch: Wesen und Form der Erzählkunst, Halle, 1942, p.413ff.

(7) Wilhelm Schäfer: Anekdoten, Gesamtausgabe, München, 1943, p.7.

Johannes Klein admits the difficulty of drawing the line of demarcation between Novelle and Kurzgeschichte, yet he does not deny that the separate existence of the Kurzgeschichte has become increasingly clear through the twentieth century, and he goes on to say: 'Wenn bisher immer wieder das Gleichnis der Familienverwandtschaft zwischen den klein-epischen und den gross-epischen Formen, mehr oder weniger ironisch, anwendbar war, so könnte man in diesem Fall sagen, dass die Kurzgeschichte ein illegitimes Kind der Novelle ist'.⁽¹⁾

This view may be a little harsh, but it is representative of many critics and also of many German writers. When one recalls 'unser Shakespeare' and even 'unser Abraham Linkhorn' in America, this bashfulness in regard to the part played by German literature in the historical development of the short story seems strange. Fritz Egner is more restrained in his comment⁽²⁾: 'Leider herrscht in bezug auf die Short Story, die nicht etwa mit einer Novelle identisch ist, noch grosse Unklarheit'.

Johannes Klein has two more points to make: 'Wenn die Kurzgeschichte entartet, so passt sie nur in die Zeitung, und nicht einmal in die beste'.⁽³⁾ Then again: 'Eine Novelle ist gut, wenn sie etwas Überraschendes hat. Eine Kurzgeschichte ist überraschend, wenn sie gut ist'.⁽⁴⁾

The harshness of these views is probably founded on a multiplicity of reasons, some of them psychological, some of them historical. There has never

- (1) Johannes Klein: Geschichte der deutschen Novelle, 4. Auflage, Wiesbaden, 1960, p.16.
- (2) Fritz Egner: Der dichterische Essay, Die Prosaform der englischen Romantik, Diss. Marburg, 1931, p.15 note 4.
- (3) Johannes Klein: Geschichte der deutschen Novelle, 4. Aufl., Wiesbaden, 1960, p.24.
- (4) *ibid.* p.25.

been for example the close association in Germany between literature and press, which has always existed in France, where established and very well-known writers have increased their stature and certainly their popularity by writing for the press, as did Dickens in England.

Such a thing simply did not happen in Germany, where for generations writers had either themselves been men of means or had relied upon the traditional system of sponsorship practised not only by Weimar but by so many of the other courts, where, it is true, many writers were encouraged and helped in their artistic development, but where also there were allowed to flourish undistinguished men, who in an open system would have disappeared from the scene.

This unrealistic artificiality ran on well into the 19th century, producing little in the way of writing that was worthwhile, and in the writers themselves a disdain for the more virile forms of writing appearing elsewhere. A curious literary snobbery caused Germans to concentrate stubbornly on blue flowers and fantasy, while their neighbours were digging gems of literature from the farmyard at their door.

The very fact that the Germans, although they must have been aware of the new form appearing in France, Russia, England and even Spain among their close neighbours, as well as in the vastness of the New World, did not even bother to find a word for it, is itself indicative of their preoccupation. The word Kurzgeschichte makes its way into German reference books only in the late 1920's, some time after the impact of such Americans as Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, William Faulkner and Saroyan.

The word in German is somehow an unsatisfactory one and reflects the

observation made by the present-day authority⁽¹⁾ Klaus Doderer: 'Die.... noch heute vorhandene Geringschätzung der Kurzgeschichte hat nicht zuletzt darin ihren Grund, dass der Ausdruck "Kurzgeschichte" stark von dem der "Anekdote" überlagert war und auf minderwärtige Zeitungs- und Magazin-literatur abgedrängt wurde'.

Whatever the reason, it would seem that because the Novelle in Germany was to some extent artificially encouraged through the 19th century, it was given a measure of literary respect which it now hardly merited when compared with the more realistic and progressive development in writing abroad, so that writers themselves seemed reluctant to break away from the traditionally acceptable. A kind of decadent Romanticism seemed to pervade German thought and letters at a time when, in Germany in particular, in every other field, startling advances were being made, reflecting the new and urgent stirrings of a vigorous spirit of social reform and technical awareness - a spirit which was present just as much in Germany as elsewhere.

Yet while France rejoiced in the works of Mérimée, Théophile Gautier and Maupassant; while Russia's Gogol and Pushkin paved the way for Chekhov, Germany, lying between these two nations, showed, towards the abbreviated form of literature at least, no sign of similar development.

Hans Adolf Ebing in his examination of the German short story⁽²⁾ fights shy of any attempt to trace its development through the 19th century, where he names only foreign writers and maintains uneasily that the German version of the short story is essentially 'different' from that appearing elsewhere. He uses the term 'die deutsche Novelle' to describe any shorter form of

(1) Klaus Doderer: Die Kurzgeschichte in Deutschland, Wiesbaden, 1953, p.18.

(2) H.A. Ebing: Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte, Bochum, 1936, pp.4-20 and 151 ff.

writing, and it is possibly this inexact terminology which deters him from making a more accurate historical survey.

Obviously, short stories were written, but neither writer nor critic called them such: they appeared as Novellen, Erzählungen, Anekdoten or Skizzen - designations still used by German publishers at the present time, in avoidance of the term Kurzgeschichte. In France, where the word 'conte' covers any shorter form of narrative, the short story was allowed to emerge and develop naturally. This was never the case in Germany. The multiplicity of terms, the by now false prestige of the Novelle and the gulf between literature and press probably contributed most to the fact that the German short story appeared haltingly, an unwanted cripple, viewed with disfavour.

A certain overlapping of terms is inevitable at the fringe of any form of writing - when does a long Novelle become a short novel? - but somehow the word Kurzgeschichte has from the outset been saddled with a derogatory value, so that the short story form has either been studiously ignored by the critics or openly condemned and writers have thus been reluctant to attempt it, and if this was understandable a hundred years ago, it is surprising that the attitude should have persisted so long.

In a broadcast in Frankfurt on 9th January 1951, under the question 'Wie ist das Bild der deutschen Story?', Heinz Coubier made the statement: "In Deutschland also gibt es keine Story. Diese wesentliche literarische Erscheinung unserer Zeit ist bisher in Deutschland ein Importartikel geblieben. Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte ist etwas anderes, sie ist entweder im Stadium des literarischen Versuchs hängen geblieben oder sie hat überhaupt nichts mit Literatur zu tun. Die deutsche Story als literarische Gattung hat nie existiert weder jetzt noch in der Vergangenheit, wenn man

von der einmaligen Erscheinung Kleists absieht...."(1)

Such a statement must surely call for an examination of the historical development of the short story both internationally and from the purely German point of view.

(1) Heinz Coubier: Abendstudio im hessischen Rundfunk, Leben im Zeitraffer, Sendung am 9. 1. 51, MS p.12.

CHAPTER 1 : HISTORICAL SURVEYA) ORIGINS

The first problem of research into the background of the short story lies in finding where to begin. Where are the roots of the modern short story?

We could refer back as far as the tales of ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, the Old Testament; we could approach modern times by way of the short stories of the middle ages to Chaucer and Boccaccio; from the episodes of the picaresque novel we could move by stages through the 17th and 18th centuries to Laurence Sterne and Defoe. There is 'short story material' in plenty. Why then should it have taken so long to develop?

The art of the story-teller lay in his telling of the story - the personality of the teller was part of the whole experience of hearing the story. The stories often were already known to the audience. Thus it is the printed short story which is the modern art, and although in Germany for many, the true forerunner of the modern short story might well be Heinrich von Kleist, at the beginning of the 19th century, the first conscious work of short story writing seems to have been Washington Irving's Sketch Book, which was printed in England in 1819.

Irving was an American who had been drifting round Europe since 1815. He studied German, and remembering how Walter Scott had been influenced by Bürger's "Lenore" and "Der wilde Jäger" as well as Goethe's "Götz", he applied himself to what he found to be a severe task and a hard study until May 1818, when, according to Fred L. Pattee,⁽¹⁾ he maintained that the

(1) Fred L. Pattee: Development of the American Short Story, New York, 1923, p.9.

'rich mine of German literature holds forth abundant reward'.

It is not therefore surprising that the Sketch Book is bathed throughout in the soft light of romanticism with which Americans were inclined to view German literature and legend. Irving himself was of a somewhat indolent nature, and so he drew eagerly on the material which lay ready-made to his hand, in the fantasies of E.T.A. Hoffman, who had brought out his major works between 1814 and 1821 (and Irving must have been familiar with these), and in the Hausmärchen of the brothers Grimm and the Volksmärchen of Johann Ludwig Tieck, which appeared between 1812 and 1815. Irving apparently denied consciously imitating his German sources, but there can be no doubt he was very strongly influenced by the legends and folklore that he read. J. Wesley Thomas goes so far as to maintain⁽¹⁾ 'Es ist darum nicht ohne Bedeutung, dass von den 45 Erzählungen Irvings, die man Kurzgeschichten nennen kann, ein Drittel deutsche Quellen verrät'.

Certainly Rip van Winkle and Peter Klaus the Goatherd would seem to be very closely related. (In fairness to Irving it could be pointed out that Wilhelm Hauff's "Das kalte Herz" is a German variation of Irving's own "The Devil and Tom Walker").

Whatever the effect on Irving, Europe seemed at this stage to be unimpressed by German fantasy. Prosper Mérimée produced his masterly "Mateo Falcone" by 1829, Balzac and Gautier were busy on short stories; Pushkin and Gogol were turning to vivid, visual writing. Gogol probably marks the step away from romanticism to more objective writing. Looking from his back door he found a life so virile, so full of conflict, that he realised he need look no further.

(1) J. Wesley Thomas: Amerikanische Dichter und die deutsche Literatur: Goslar, 1950, p.27.

In England Charles Lamb was shortly to be followed by Charles Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell and Robert Louis Stevenson.

So prior to 1850, the first steps had been taken, the first awareness awakened, both in Europe and in America; the second half of the nineteenth century brought its huge technical and industrial progress, the development of railways, the immense spread of the popular press and the new restlessness which prompted men to emigrate on an unprecedented scale - and these were reflected in the writing, and in the form of writing, of the world as a whole. New ways of life required new kinds of literature. Wider travel brought greater and closer knowledge of out-of-the-way peoples and places, whole new interests developed, so that the travel story came into its own. Stories were written against new and fascinating backgrounds, especially in America, where the vastness and variety of sprawling cities and wide prairies caught the imagination.

There are those who maintain that the short story derives entirely from this later period, spawned as it were from the bustle of life which left less time for reading and less time for writing, a child of unrest. But Ruth Lorbe ⁽¹⁾ asserts that if this were true, no novels or longer works would now be written at all - a valid point which goes on perhaps to over-elaborate by attempting to relate the emergence of the short story in modern times to man's realisation of the insignificance of the earth in the universe, and hence of the insignificance of man himself and his previous concepts.

(1) Ruth Lorbe: "Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte in der Jahrhundertmitte", Deutschunterricht, Jahrgang 9, 1957, Heft 1, p.36.

B) AMERICA

The immediate success enjoyed by Washington Irving prompted two of his young American contemporaries, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe to follow his lead.

Hawthorne was greatly influenced by Johann Ludwig Tieck, much of whose brooding fancy and symbolism are to be found in Hawthorne's 'Notebooks' which were published in 1843.

Edgar Allan Poe on the other hand found in Hoffmann a kindred spirit. The two men were much alike. Both embarked on a series of nightmare excursions. Both, like Lawrence of a later age, were sick men. Both were neurotic, sensitive, subject to illusions to the degree of being at least near to insanity, and in the feverish quality of high emotion and morbidity, in the half-lunatic suspense and frenzied fantasy, there is somehow a magnetism which compels attention. The astonishing spread of spiritualism across America after the publication of Poe's work may be a reflection of the extent of his influence on his contemporaries.

Irving, Hawthorne and Poe were fascinated by the fantasy brought to them by German sources. Each one of them contributed a great deal to the development of the short story, yet their individual contributions were not entirely similar. They represent rather the first three stages which German legend and fantasy underwent in becoming 'American' short stories.

Irving it was who first made short fiction popular, stripping the prose tale of the moral and didactic elements it had acquired, so that it again became something solely for entertainment. He gave his tales an authentic setting against an American background, made his characters human and appealing, introducing a homely humour amongst homely people, so that he saunters

through his piece in a way that makes plot completely unessential. His popularity was immediate and immense. He became a model for countless aspiring writers so that, paradoxically, he gave the first impetus to the short story as such, yet hindered its progress and growth for a generation.

Hawthorne, following on, brought sanity to German romantic extravagance, making the story the study of one intense situation. Himself a man of strictly puritanical upbringing and belief, his excursions into the art of short story writing, apart from showing a certain merit of their own, brought a respectability even in New England, to the form of fiction which Irving had made so popular.

Edgar Allan Poe excelled in the study of passive horror. He was widely read through America, but his importance in the development of the short story stems from the fact that he appeared at the right time, and in 1842 laid down for the first time a neat formula for the writing of a short story, thus:

1. A story must aim at one predetermined effect.
2. It must possess complete unity by excluding everything which does not contribute directly to that effect.
3. It must be short, but not so short that the 'pre-established design' cannot be realised.

Poe further stated quite categorically: "In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one established design".⁽¹⁾

Thus the aim of the narrative was given as 'one established design', to produce one single effect, and it is perhaps relevant here to refer to

(1) Poe's Literary Criticism, edited by J.B. Moore, New York, 1926, p.123.

an older comment, by Aristotle,⁽¹⁾ where he says: "We have laid it down that tragedy is a representation of an action which is whole and complete and of a certain magnitude, since a thing may be a whole and yet have no magnitude. A whole is what has a beginning and a middle and an end. A beginning is that which is not a necessary consequent of anything else but after which something else exists or happens as a natural result. An end on the contrary is that which is inevitably or, as a rule, the natural result of something else but from which nothing else follows; a middle follows something else and something follows from it. Well-constructed plots must not therefore begin and end at random but must embody the formulae we have stated".

In concentrating on one single effect, one single event, it became evident that the existing form of narrative would require a great deal of pruning. Each word had to be carefully chosen and selected for its maximum effect. The long opening preamble, hitherto fashionable, would now be an encumbrance, for a story cannot be pungent and dramatic in its presentation if there is to be a lengthy and leisurely introduction to the characters and to the situation before the action proper even begins.

Edgar Allan Poe, by setting out his formula when he did, first brought this necessary concentration to the notice of the writers of the time, and although Washington Irving, with his Sketch Book, may be regarded as the 'father' of the modern short story, it was Poe who first realised there must be a pattern or form for the narrative.

Others however were not so quick in their awakening to this necessity, and Poe's formula was by no means immediately effective. Indeed it was

(1) Aristotle: Poetics. Chapter VII, paras 2 - 7.

widely ignored by his fellow countrymen. The short story was the natural successor to the narrative, the 'conte' or the tale, so the instinctive and ready-made method of narration was to use the technique of the story-teller.

Thus the hero was introduced in his opening situation along these lines:

'It was a dark and stormy night as I stepped ashore in Falmouth..'.
'

Then the story could be developed as the narrator felt inclined.

There are countless examples of this kind of opening e.g.:

1. One winter's evening, about five o'clock, just as it began to grow dusk, a man in a gig might have been seen.... (Charles Dickens: The Bagman's Story, 1837).
2. At nightfall, once, in olden times, on the rugged side of one of the Crystal Hills, a party of adventurers were refreshing themselves.... (Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Great Carbuncle, 1851).
3. The Mill where Will lived with his adopted parents stood in a falling valley between pinewoods and great mountains... (Robert Louis Stevenson: Will o' the Mill, 1887).
4. In einem unscheinbaren Dörfchen am Rhein sass eines Abends, als es schon dunkeln wollte, ein armer, junger Mann.... (J.P. Hebel: Franziska, 1811).
5. In der Strasse St. Honoré war das kleine Haus gelegen.... (E.T.A. Hoffmann: Das Fräulein von Scudéri, 1819).
6. Während einer jener Thronstreitigkeiten früherer Jahrhunderte, von denen die Teilkönigreiche der spanischen Halbinsel häufig betroffen wurden.... (W. Bergengruen: Die Krone, 1946).

Back in 1850, the short story as such had won no real recognition in America as a literary form although Rufus W. Griswold⁽¹⁾ pointed out in 1847 that a new unit of literature had been evolved, and that much was due to the

(1) Rufus W. Griswold: Prose Writers of America, New York, 1847, pp.32-34.

Germans in beginning the movement. And the fact that Americans were interested in German material was noted by H.A. Pochmann⁽¹⁾ who lists the following items by German authors published in American journals between 1810 and 1864:

<u>Name</u>	<u>No. of items</u>	<u>Years</u>
Brothers Grimm	11	From 1822
Hoffmann	15	1825 - 52
Hauff	15	1835 onwards
"Grün"	12	1839 onwards
Auerbach	14	1847 onwards
Gerstäcker	11	1847 onwards

In the second half of the century there were, if anything even more German contributions, and because certain groups of American writers believed that the developing literature of America could be enriched by infusing material directly from German sources, an association known as the Genteel Writers translated with perhaps more diligence than inspiration not only the works of Goethe and Schiller, but also those of Tieck, Cellert and Jean Paul, as well as introducing those contemporary writers shown above.

German men of letters were flattered by the attention paid to them by the Americans, who now began to come in increasing numbers to visit Germany to absorb its romantic atmosphere for themselves.

Bayard Taylor for example travelled widely in Europe in 1844-45, then again in 1856. He visited Rückert, Gerstäcker, Gutzkow, Auerbach and Fritz Reuter before returning to America, where he then lectured extensively, and wrote in 1859 At Home and Abroad - 1, which he followed in 1862 by At Home

(1) H.A. Pochmann: German Culture in America, 1600-1900, Univ. of Wisconsin, 1956, p.343.

and Abroad - 2 both of which gave accounts of his travels in Germany. Then in 1868 he wrote Byways of Europe. All three books were very widely read in America and must have helped shape the attitude of literary-minded Americans towards Germany at the time.

C.G. Leland, also enchanted by Germany, created the Breitmann ballads, a burlesque of the German-American immigrant, which achieved such immediate success as to become a fashionable cult which brought a tolerant awareness of German concepts and customs amongst Americans.

If these were individually better-known as writers in America, there were groups of lesser-known writers who together made a considerable contribution to the spread of German culture and German ideas among the American reading public. Such men as R.H. Stoddart, E.E. Hale, G.H. Boker, C.D. Warner, E.C. Stedman and Eugene Field all wrote in the second half of the nineteenth century on German themes.

As the century progressed, American interest in Germany shifted from the legendary to the contemporary, and there arose a much greater demand for stories by such writers as Freytag, Zschokke - whose "Toter Gast" was very popular - and for the tales of Swiss village life by Gottfried Keller.

Between 1864-79 there were in America twenty editions of Auerbach's Dorfgeschichten, while Gerstäcker's story "Germelshausen" was also widely successful. It is interesting that this particular story should in the 1950's form the basis for an American film called "Brigadoon", in which the theme of the village which had disappeared, to reappear only once every hundred years, was retained as the background for a musical.

One surprising fact is that the Plattdeutsch of Fritz Reuter was in translation much more readily accepted in America than it was in England.

A second thread of development to be vigorously pursued in America was the 'local colour' story, with its regional characters and scenes of regional life. Irving and Hawthorne had pioneered this type of story, which was then produced in the 1840's and 1850's by A.B. Longstreet, T.B. Thorpe and J.J. Cooper, who in turn were overshadowed by Bret Harte and Mark Twain.

These two, writing after the Civil War, turned out stories not only of local colour and interest, but which contained for the first time as an integral part of the story that particular brand of hilarious humour in which American short story writers seem to have excelled ever since. Both men were lionised by the whole country. Mark Twain indeed became a world celebrity and possibly the most internationally conspicuous American man of letters of the epoch. Yet in reference purely to the development of the American short story, it is Bret Harte who has probably exerted a greater influence than any other writer save Irving.

On closer examination of his work it would seem that his influence was far greater than the quality of his writing might have entitled him to expect, for there is not much in the stories of Bret Harte which is entirely sincere. His characterisation for example lacks the obvious sincerity of O. Henry. In Harte, technique is developed to a higher degree than had previously been the case among short story writers. Harte was above all a professional journalist and to his writing he brought a professional awareness, a conscious use of paradox and antithesis, a sense of drama and the theatre. His work might well be described as theatre rather than life. He wrote as a professional entertainer, and was probably the first to make use of the 'twist in the tail' technique, the unexpected ending, at which O. Henry was to become so adept. If his stories lack something of the truth and whole-

hearted honesty which should be the basis of all great fiction, as entertainment they still rank very high indeed, although it may be possible that his conscious 'writing for the market' may have contributed to some of the later distrust of the short story as such.

As technique developed, explanation dropped out and implication took its place. As Henry James, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Thomas Bailey Aldridge and O. Henry reached an ever-widening public, they and others who aspired to the same measure of success consciously and methodically began to analyse and then to practise a technique specifically for the short story.

It was this conscious study in America of the new form in writing which first brought to the Americans the quality of professionalism and expertise in the short story which they have since retained.

Edgar Allan Poe's formula - however powerful its effect abroad may have been - hardly influenced the development of American technique at all, but the success of Bret Harte and Mark Twain did. Other Americans were quick to analyse the ingredients of success and went on to apply them for themselves.

Bret Harte's twist in the tail, Mark Twain's tolerant humour, O. Henry's openings and endings: these were the elements of successful technique in the second half of the nineteenth century in America, and these were the writers who first established the short story in that country as a literary genre.

Bret Harte and Mark Twain spoke for the West as writers of 'local colour' stories, but other areas of the United States had their representatives too: Harriet Beecher Stowe, with her 'Oldtown' fireside stories, and Sarah Orne Jewett with various collections such as Deephaven, 1877, A White

Heron and Others, 1886 and A Native of Winby and other tales, 1893, were in the lead, but were followed by Constance Fenimore Woolson, George W. Cable and Joel Chandler Harris.

Thereafter came a host of imitators, in much of whose writing however, the 'local colour' gave way all too often to an indiscriminate use of dialect, which finally and inevitably led to a reaction against this type of story altogether.

But if the short story as a form of writing was attracting the interest of writers in various parts of America, it was only from about 1880 that we find the actual term 'short story' being used in that country as a description of an independent literary form. Prior to that, stories were short or stories were long, depending only on the demands of the magazine for which they were intended, or on the author's sense of proportion, but the 'short story' was still somehow an inferior development of the writing art. An unknown critic in Scribner's Monthly in the year 1880 is quoted by Fred L. Pattee as saying of a Bret Harte story⁽¹⁾: 'Short story though it may be, it is an honor to American literature'. And this was an attitude completely typical of the time.

Now however in England and in Russia, and in America also, writers were actively examining the techniques of the short story. In France, it might be fair to say that the short story developed naturally and within limits which were imposed, not by any formulated theory, but by an innate sense of form inherent in French writers and deriving possibly from the literary tradition they had behind them, whereas the Americans developed the

(1) Fred L. Pattee: The Development of the American Short Story, New York, 1923, p.292.

short story for themselves and by applied analysis.

While they were so preoccupied, a second type of story had already become established in Europe - the realistic short story, in which the basis of the story structure lay in the behaviour of the characters, so that the development of these characters should be the logical, inevitable starting-point for all action. This type of story had not yet gained a footing in America, but Henry James, who had travelled widely in Europe in the 1850's and had already written a number of 'travel' books, now concentrated for a time on the short story and along with William Dean Howells and Hamlin Garland paved the way in America for the 'realistic' story.

They were probably helped in doing so by the reaction against the regional 'local colour' story in its degeneration, which during the 1890's led in effect to the cry of 'back to Hawthorne'. This in turn led to a re-examination of the formula set out by Edgar Allan Poe for the short story, and to some further critical writing on technique.

In 1887, William Dean Howells in the 'Editor's Study' in Harper's Magazine examined the reason for the increase in the number of short stories then appearing and rejected the claim that they were probably more suitable for the American temperament than were novels. He rejected too, the statement that they were due to the increasing tempo of life in America and states simply that the short story was in a position to supply the needs of the growing American press - simply a matter of supply and demand, in quantity and in quality.

As with most sweeping statements, this was probably an over-simplification of the case, for was not the rapid growth of the American press due at least in some measure to the 'increasing tempo of life in America'?

In 1889, commenting directly on the short story,⁽¹⁾ Bret Harte pointed out that American literature had hitherto been limited to English methods and English models. Its sentiment had been English. Then he went on to uphold the American pattern which was emerging, containing as he said, an unexpected factor - humour.

Finally he maintains: 'It would seem evident that the secret of the American short story is the treatment of characteristic American life, with absolute knowledge of its peculiarities and sympathy with its methods; with no fastidious ignoring of its habitual expression, or the inchoate poetry that may be the legitimate outcome of the story itself; with no more elimination than may be necessary for the artistic conception and never from fear of the fetish of conventionalism. Of such is the American short story of today.'

Bret Harte was commenting on the model of the American story which he himself had done so much to popularise. That it had become submerged in dialect was not his fault, but nevertheless it was in danger of suffocation.

Brander Matthews, who had earlier declared that the short story was reducible to 'certain essential ingredients', thereby encouraging a host of writers to churn out a pattern story to meet magazine requirements, now set out the requisites of a short story thus:⁽²⁾

1. Originality - the short story demands an originality not necessarily expected of a novel.

(1) Bret Harte: "The Rise of the Short Story", The Cornhill Magazine, Vol 7, July 1899, pp. 1-8.

(2) Brander Matthews: The Philosophy of the Short Story, New York, 1901, pp. 16ff.

2. Unity - the writer must aim at unity of impression. Here Matthews renews Poe's theory of totality of effect, while calling at the same time for concentration on one central character, one event, one situation.
3. Compression - the writer cannot afford any deviation from the planned course.
4. Brilliance of style - emphasising the most effective and striking use of words.
5. Action - while the sketch is more of a still life, the short story should stem from one event, and the theme must be built, not from character study and atmosphere but from the action.
6. Form - the feeling for form, the instinct governing the construction of the story is one of the greatest abilities the writer can show. The story must develop logically, with a harmony within itself and in keeping with the matter presented.
7. Substance - the artistic worth of the story depends largely on the idea behind it. The author must have something to tell the reader, then he must decide on the most effective form in which to present it and must seek a balance between form and content.
8. Fantasy - is desirable, even in the short story, although not essential.

In giving these requisites, Matthews does not indicate in any way how such admirable qualities are to be achieved, and although he campaigned enthusiastically from the mid-1880's into the new century on behalf of the short story, most writers do tend to follow a pattern of writing already established as successful, rather than to follow a theory - however persuasively expressed - in the hope of earning original success for themselves.

The influence therefore of such established writers of international standing as Maupassant, Flaubert, Zola, Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling, who were not only known, but very widely-read in America, was both immediate and impressive. That of Rudyard Kipling, whose Plain Tales from the Hills, published in 1888, took the continent of America by storm, gave a new life and a new strength to the American short story, which has never left it.

Writers such as R.H. Davis, F.H. Smith, Owen Wister, W.A. White, Stephen Crane, Jack London, and above all O. Henry furthered the development of the journalistic kind of short story. Now, at the end of the nineteenth century, the term 'short story' became a valid concept, separating the short story from 'tales' and 'narratives'.

Prior to the impetus given by Kipling, according to Elizabeth Bowen,⁽¹⁾ the American short story was no more than a condensed novel. She goes on to say: 'The short stories of James and Hardy show a sober virtuosity: they were tours de force by practical executants, side-issues from the crowded imagination. They show no urgent necessity; their matter does not dictate their form. Their shortness is not positive, it is mere non-extension.... Their very excellence made them a dead-end: they did not invite imitation, or advance in any way the development of the short story proper... That impetus had to come from abroad'.

It did. It came at the turn of the century, from England's Rudyard Kipling.

If the journalist reflects his time, then surely his mirror is not only

(1) Elizabeth Bowen: Introduction to the Faber Book of Modern Short Stories, London, 1937, p.8.

the newspaper, but also the short story. Rudyard Kipling's work would seem to bear this out. Journals may give facts and events, while short stories are fiction, but Kipling worked on the principle that if the background to his story were absolutely true to life, completely real, the fiction which he wrote against that background could be as imaginative as he liked, the story would still be convincing.

This certainly was what he practised. The background to his Plain Tales from the Hills was a background which he knew - and he was fortunate in that it had colour, mystery and an exotic appeal. His style was crisp and matter-of fact. He was after all a journalist and maintained that you must write of what is interesting. Because he did that, his stories are outstanding. He represents a summit not only of financial achievement in the short story both in America and England, but also a summit of technique, and he brought a new life and vigour to American writing so that at last in America, the short story became a focus of attention, and almost every writer of standing made some comment on the writer's art.⁽¹⁾

(1) Fred L. Pattee in The Development of the American Short Story, New York, 1923, p.377 gives a list of books and articles on short story history and technique, from the time of E.A. Poe.

1. Poe's Review on Hawthorne, Graham's Magazine, 1842.
2. Charles R. Barrett: Short Story Writing, Chicago, 1898.
3. Bret Harte: "The Rise of the Short Story", Cornhill Magazine, July 1899.
4. W.D. Howells: "Anomalies of the Short Story" in Literature and Life, New York, 1902.
5. Bliss Perry: A Study of Prose Fiction, Boston and New York, 1902, Chapter 1e.
6. Brander Matthews: The Short Story - Specimens illustrating its development, New York, 1907.

c) EUROPE

For Hans Halm⁽¹⁾ the short story in Europe was taken up by the French, English, Norwegians, Poles and Russians, in that order. But to the Germans, intent on giving due attention to thoroughness and detail, the fleeting form of the short story apparently made little appeal.

It is true that Otto Erich Hartleben (1864 - 1905) and Ompfeda (1863 - 1931) made certain pioneering efforts in the 1890's but these were neither appreciated nor encouraged, although R.M. Meyer⁽²⁾ after mentioning the short stories of Maupassant, Poe, Bret Harte and Mark Twain, then Chekhov and the Dane Hermann Bang, goes on to say: 'In Deutschland waren wir mit den Anfängen Ompfedas und des schwankhaften, aber kunstverständigen Hartleben auf dem besten Wege. Aber da ist die unselige Skizze dazwischengekommen, die unfertige Kunstgeschichte, das Libretto zu einer Romannovelle.... und so sind wir.....steckengeblieben'.

In a number of countries in Europe the short story found favour as a result of the increasing interest in the travel story, the personal narrative of a visit to another country, the diary of one man's journeyings.

In England there had already been a forerunner for Washington Irving in Laurence Sterne, whose sentimental journeys of 1768 are perhaps the earliest collection of such tales. Certain it is however, that in England, France and even Spain, there appeared in the early nineteenth century many 'travel' tales, which in turn gave way to more sophisticated stories. Gautier in France used travel as a basis for stories over a period of twenty-

(1) Hans Halm: Anton Tschechovs Kurzgeschichte und deren Vorläufer; Weimar, 1933, p.3.

(2) R.M. Meyer: Weltliteratur im XX. Jahrhundert, Stuttgart und Berlin, 1913, p.153.

odd years. His Voyage en Espagne appeared in 1845 and his Voyage en Russie in 1866.

In Russia, aloof even then, if not unaffected, travel as such was not of primary interest. Perhaps, as in America, the vastness of the country was in itself a source of sufficient interest and 'local colour'. Certainly the earliest writings of Gogol were on purely local themes, as exemplified by Evenings in a Farm near Dikanka (1831), and his comedy Revizor (1836), which was later translated into English as The Government Inspector.

In contrast to others who were travelling abroad and then writing of their travels, Gogol spent twelve years in Rome writing of Russia. His compatriot Pushkin was more orthodox, travelled, and wrote of his travels in the short time between 1831 and his early death in 1837.

The close connection between the press and literature, which has always existed in France, was also very apparent in England throughout the nineteenth century and was responsible for the immediate and wide popularity of Charles Dickens, whose impact on the reading public was as phenomenal then as was the impact of the Beatles on a different public in the 1960's.

Dickens could with some justification be called the first 'popular' writer, because he wrote for the press, and through the medium of the press, for his public. It is true that Walter Scott had already achieved widespread popularity in his Waverley novels, but Dickens was the writer for the man in the street.

It is equally true that neither Dickens nor Scott found the short story an easy medium of expression, yet many examples are to be found in Pickwick Papers. Published chapter by chapter, each one being complete

in itself, many of the exploits of Sam Weller, of Pickwick himself, the Nimrod Club, along with the cricket of Dingley Dell, 'The Bagman's Story', 'The Old Man's Tale' and 'The Stroller's Tale' are themselves short stories.

Walter Scott too, in his "Wandering Willie's Tale",⁽¹⁾ has shown a complete mastery, whether conscious or not, of the art of developing a story so that its evolution appears to come from within the story itself.

Characteristic of this period in literary development in England is the immense range over which the stories roam. Appealing to every human emotion, to every human interest, they extend from almost inhuman degradation to almost superhuman virtue and piety. Most of the writers in England in the nineteenth century, beginning with Scott and Lamb (and even Benjamin Disraeli: "Ixion in Heaven" 1833), then Dickens, Trollope, Stevenson, Hardy, Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell, and finally Conan Doyle and Kipling turned to short stories.

It is perhaps surprising that only Mrs. Gaskell among the women wrote fine short stories. To her sketches in Cranford (1853) she brings an accuracy of observation and a clarity of characterisation which are admirable.

(1) Walter Scott: Redgauntlet, Vol.1, Edinburgh, 1824, p.208ff.

CHAPTER 2 : GERMANYA) ATTITUDE TO AMERICA IN 19th CENTURY

During the First World War, when the British invented the tank, its potential was recognised by everyone except the highest professional soldiers of Britain, who looked at it with thinly-veiled scorn, directed its use under the worst possible conditions and gratefully accepted its comparative failure as proof, as if any were required, of their own sagacity and professional acumen.

The German attitude to the short story in the nineteenth century (and indeed beyond) was very similar in its lack of enthusiasm, to that of Britain's generals. When the potential of the shorter form of narrative was recognised at once abroad, from the moment Washington Irving tapped his German sources and produced his 'Sketch Book' in 1819, imaginations in France, in England, in Russia and in America were fired, so that the majority of established writers and many others besides turned to the short story with considerable zest - but what were the Germans doing?

In the main they adhered studiously to attempting to maintain and develop the romanticism of Brentano, turning to mysticism and legend in the face of their own technical advance as though the sudden popularity in America of German folklore and fantasy made such a continuation necessary.

It is interesting at this point to make reference to a survey made by the American, Harvey W. Hewett-Thayer,⁽¹⁾ who refers to the periodical

(1) H.W. Hewett-Thayer: American Literature as viewed in Germany from 1818-61; Univ. of N.C. Press, 1958.

published in the mid-nineteenth century in Germany entitled Magazin für die Literatur des Auslands. Foreign writers and literature held by the editors to be of importance are brought to the attention of German readers, and articles from such periodicals as the Edinburgh Magazine on current literature abroad (as for example in August 1832, December 1841 etc.), are reproduced in translation.

In the Magazin there seems to be a tendency to acknowledge American material wealth, but to deny the very existence not only of tradition and culture - at that time very widely held to be lacking in America - but also of imagination and creative ability altogether because of that lack of background.

In an article on Washington Irving for example, the author enquires: 'Wie kann man sich in der That einen Begriff von einem durchaus Amerikanischen Genie machen? Was soll es für eine Erziehung, für eine Abstammung, was für Erinnerungen soll es haben? Welche grosse Namen können es begeistern, welche Geschichte hat es hinter sich? In den Kollegien von Boston und Philadelphia ist die Erziehung ganz Europäisch, aus Europäischen Büchern und Europäischen Erinnerungen schöpfen sie ihre Weisheit.... Und dann ist auch keine National-Sprache da....'(1)

While the possibilities of an American national literature emerging are discussed in later issues of the Magazin, stress is still laid on the dependence of American authors upon European models, until the German reader - and also the literary critic - might well believe that American literature owed its stimulus more to Germany and German sources than to anywhere else.

(1) Magazin für die Literatur des Auslands, Berlin, 20 August 1832, p.349.

There seems to have been a certain indulgence in the attitude of the Germans towards the Americans in their viewing of Romanticism as a whole and to the folk legend in particular. Romanticism as such may have been dead, but while the whole world around entered the age of telegraphy, the railway, the steam engine, and while Germans from the Baltic to Bavaria turned eagerly to industry and technical invention, German men of letters seemed to remain wrapped in the past.

They were interested in what the Americans were writing, and viewed with a tolerant and fatherly eye the use the Americans were making of their own German material, until as a result they became interested in America itself. Periodicals such as the Magazin für die Literatur des Auslands, already mentioned, and also the Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung published articles on slave states and slavery, on American education, on religion, the freedom of the press, the status and place of women in America, and above all countless stories, articles and anecdotes of the frontier, the American Indian, log cabins and settlers - an interest continued to the present day in the numerous tales of Karl May.

In 1850 Brockhaus published selections from Irving's writing in English and in German translation, which the Magazin reviewed on December 20th of that year. But while it is true that a number of short stories were translated during this period, they could hardly equal the immense popularity of books like Fenimore Cooper's Last of the Mohicans and Harriet Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. Hewett Thayer maintains that there were at one time no fewer than 20 translations of Uncle Tom's Cabin available in Germany at once.

The influence of Fenimore Cooper is apparent in German in the writings

of Charles Sealsfield, Friedrich Gerstäcker and also of course, Karl May, and it is interesting to note that the interchange of stories and story material between America and Germany at this time was not entirely in the one direction.

As we have already seen, German literature supplied much of the material for the early American short story, German sources giving much impetus to its development, but many of the German writers were prepared simply to tell a story for its narrative content, and thus did not develop to any degree the technique of writing, as the Americans were then trying to do.

In brief, it would seem that German literary interest in America during the 19th century lay mainly in stories of the frontier, the wide open spaces, the vast prairies and ranges. This near-fascination was felt throughout the whole of Europe, and while it led to a vast amount of translation of books of the backwoods, resulting possibly in a desire to emigrate, very few native Europeans could themselves write against such a background - Gerstäcker and later Karl May being two notable exceptions - so that it would be an exaggeration to say that the Americans influenced the development of the short story in Germany in any way at that time.

On the other hand, while the Germans themselves were perhaps given to exaggerate the effect of German literature and legend on the Americans, it cannot be denied that the German influence was there; it was one of the factors in the development of American literary culture and writing, including the short story, and it is very significant that this influence in the nineteenth century is directed more from Germany towards America, than from America towards Germany, although it always remained an influence of material and inspiration, of source rather than technique.

The Americans, the English, the Russians and the French were all separately and individually developing a short story pattern to suit their own requirements, but in Germany, although some individual writers were prepared to experiment, there was no general realisation of new possibilities, no real desire for change, so literary form remained traditional.

B) NOVELLE AND SHORT STORY

What of the short story as it actually developed in Germany? The first, and the most confusing difficulty in making any evaluation, lies as we have already found, in the terminology of the time. There was no name for the short story as such, and because authors, publishers and critics alike used whatever title suited their purpose, we cannot accept as valid any of the definitions which they used, and must turn instead to the stories themselves and to the ingredients of these stories and judge them on this basis.

As soon as we attempt to do this, we are confronted by the problem of the overlap between the Novelle and the short story. This same problem exists of course in every national literature, but at first sight it seems out of all proportion in Germany, so this calls for a closer examination of the Novelle itself, and then of the relationship between the Novelle and the short story.

What do the Germans themselves have to say about the Novelle? It must be remembered that the term 'Novelle' was applied to any short form of narrative writing because there was no defined formula or pattern for it, so that Goethe has some justification for asking Eckermann⁽¹⁾: '.... denn was ist eine Novelle anders als eine sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit? Dies ist der eigentliche Begriff, und so vieles, was in Deutschland unter dem Titel Novelle geht, ist gar keine Novelle, sondern bloss Erzählung oder was Sie sonst wollen....'

Here Goethe is not defining the Novelle as such, this is a point made by Karl Konrad Polheim p.55⁽²⁾ who indicates that not only was Goethe's quota-

(1) J.P. Eckermann: Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens, Leipzig, 1913, Donnerstag Abend, 25 Januar 1827.

(2) Karl Konrad Polheim: Novellentheorie und Novellenforschung, Stuttgart, 1965.

tion one single sentence, negatively expressed, but also that Tieck's 'Wendepunkt' theory takes up but little space amongst other utterances, and that Heyse's 'Falkentheorie' is given in five lines. The point made by Goethe is that much that was written under the title of 'Novelle' was not in fact a 'Novelle' at all, but some other form of writing.

What Goethe saw as 'unusual' - his unerhörte Begebenheit - turned more and more towards flights of fancy and the grotesque; as it drew further from realism its content became at once romantic and psychological. Some increased vastly in length - Mörike's works, under the heading of 'Novellen' range in length from 15 pages to his massive Maler Nolten of 400. By the end of the 19th century, the Novelle as such was in a decline.

In 1886, Anton Schönbach wrote an article⁽¹⁾ on the popularity of the short story in America. He commented that in attempting a similar style the German failing was that they too frequently simply condensed novels, whereas the Americans gave a realistic excerpt from life, in which one single, in itself often unimportant but characteristic event is described, the atmosphere and effect depending entirely on the acuteness of the author's powers of observation and on his ability in the art of telling and presenting his material.

Schönbach uses the term Novelette, meaning a shortened form of Novelle, and leads on to the idea of the abbreviated Novelle as suitable material for magazine and newspaper.

We must remember that this was in 1886, when the short story in Germany had been accepted neither as a form of writing nor as a literary con-

(1) Anton Schönbach: Article in Deutsche Rundschau, March/May 1886, pp. 93-112, and 186-214.

cept at all. The use of the term Novelette for the short Novelle, in the same way as the English novelette represents a short novel, may in German have originated with Schönbach.

In 1906 as we have already seen, Richard M. Meyer⁽¹⁾ places the short story form somewhere between the novel and the Novelle, in his much-quoted statement: 'Ich möchte sie definieren als einen Roman, der in die Form der Novelle zurückgedrängt ist.'

Meyer, possibly confused by the American concept of 'peaks of interest' according to the length of the story, calls for 'at least two climactic points', whereas for most critics the short story should contain one decisive climax which is the turning-point and often also the culmination of the whole story.

There is no doubt that the Novelle enjoyed a golden age in Germany throughout the nineteenth century. In the field of creative forms of literature very little changed, until eventually the mere fact that the Novelle had become the accepted traditional form for shorter narrative became in itself a distinct hindrance to short story development.

As in the case of art however, literature has always been an international asset, and like artists, men of letters have never allowed themselves to be limited in outlook for long by political or geographical boundaries. It is not possible therefore for creative art - in painting or in letters - to remain for long completely static, and once the idea of the short story as a possible new form began to spread, it was inevitable that in Germany writers should begin to experiment - wittingly or unwittingly - with a form

(1) Richard M. Meyer: Handbuch des Unterrichts an höheren Schulen, Vol. 3, Part 1, München 1906, p.182.

of writing which had so much in common with the Novelle and yet was so different.

An overlap was bound to occur between the established form and the new. By the end of the century, although some writers had extended their Novellen considerably in length, shorter narratives were also beginning to appear, in which the action was built up towards the ending, where the emphasis now fell.

Such a story for example is "Der erste Schultag"⁽¹⁾ in which a young Jewish boy is tormented by his teacher to such a degree that he eventually runs away to find refuge with an old herbalist whom he knows. He is however too late: the herbalist is dead.

Karlheinz Zierott⁽²⁾ writing in 1952, maintains that it is in this question of emphasis that the main difference between the story of the nineteenth and the story of the twentieth century lies. For the greater part of the nineteenth century the emphasis lay not on the plot, not on the turning-point of the story, but on the author's attention to detail and background, yet by the end of the century the reader was no longer interested in the picture as a whole, in its frame, because he was now more interested in the course of events and how these would combine to produce an effect unforeseen at the outset.

It was this concept of emphasis, according to Zierott, which led to an examination of the technique of telling the story, a concept which in Germany was quite new, but another present-day authority, Klaus Doderer, sees

(1) Holz und Schlaf: Papa Hamlet Collection; Leipzig, 1889.

(2) Karlheinz Zierott: Die Kurzgeschichte in Literatur und Presse, München, 1952, p.75.

an early example of the breakaway in form from the Novelle in Hoffmann's Ritter Glück ⁽¹⁾ and Doderer points out that Hebbel too attains the form of the short story ("Die Kuh" and "Barbier Zitterlein") by concentrating on one action and one character. The direction of the whole action towards the surprise ending, as in Bret Harte, O. Henry and Chekhov was still to come.

For Doderer, the second step in the emancipation of the short story comes as a parallel to the decline of the Novelle. As the Novelle waned, there was bound to arise a desire for experiment in form, and for a brief moment the Skizze came into the limelight, as a forerunner of the short story - just as 'sketches' by Irving, Maupassant and Dickens are short stories - so that Theodor Storm and the early Gerhart Hauptmann both show strong elements of the short story.

Doderer points out ⁽²⁾ that the short story derives from a twist of fate, and asks what is that, if it is not Goethe's 'unerhörte Begebenheit', and then he goes on to examine the Novelle alongside of the short story:

1. In the Novelle, the whole sequence of the event is shown, this is not the case in the short story.
2. The Novelle offers a solution of the problem: the short story need not.
3. The source of the Novelle can stem from anywhere, the short story depends on the 'Schicksalsbruch' - the quirk of fate.
4. The position of the climax in the Novelle is fixed - it is not in the short story.
5. There is a leading-up to the final attainment of aim in the Novelle: this is not necessarily the case in the short story, where the climax may be sharply abrupt.

(1) Klaus Doderer: Die Kurzgeschichte in Deutschland, Wiesbaden, 1953, pp. 41-42.

(2) *ibid.* p. 69.

As an example of a typical Novelle, Doderer cites Binding's "Opfergang", where 15 scenes are devoted to the development and to a certain extent the solution of the entire situation. If, Doderer points out, this had been written as a short story, it would have focussed on one scene only, probably the last one, with the previous scenes only implied, as was done by Hans Franck in his short story "Lüge" - where the central character is lying in the torments of fever and speaks in his delirium to his wife. But he sees her as his mistress, and she has to answer in the role of mistress, so that he will respond at all. Here all the concentration is on this fateful scene only.

What for Doderer then are the requirements of the short story? Primarily, the interest in a short story should be brought to focus on one individual and the problem confronting him. The aim of the writer should not be to show the heroic qualities of this central character, but to present us with a sharp and revealing impression of a man at the crossroads in his relationship to his fate or problem. The classical concept of a man as a component part of an impersonal and unchangeable cosmos no longer applies. Instead, the central figure finds himself, as a victim of circumstance, in a situation where he does have a choice of actions - limited, it is true - whose consequence cannot fully be foreseen, which heads frequently to the 'open' or unresolved ending. The reader is left with the problem still on his hands.

Secondly, as Doderer points out, the Novelle in the nineteenth century needed a comparatively long introduction - he quotes Die Versuchung des Pescara - while the short story must in its opening sentence set the reader in the middle of the action, as does Wolfgang Borchert, or Wilhelm Schäfer in his story "Im letzten D-Zugwagen".

Here, although Doderer does not specifically make the point, he is in agreement with the formula by Edgar Allan Poe regarding the opening sentences of the short story - and indeed with Aristotle, looking for a beginning, a middle and an end. In terms of the short story, the beginning is the action which first upsets the status quo, the middle is the complication which inevitably follows on that action, while the end is reached with the action which restores or may be expected to restore a balance to the situation.

This immediate involvement of the reader in the action of the story, the given atmosphere, the given situation, excludes altogether the gradual building-up to a climax, which was typical of the Novelle. The whole story becomes more compact, more abrupt.

Also, in contrast to the Novelle, it is true that the short story is often built round one single episode, one single character, or even one single moment - its aim being the presentation and psychological clarification of a piece of reality. It is a slice of life, whether in the presentation of a character, a situation or a thought.

Doderer likens it to the switching on of a light which is then left on just long enough for the reader to take in the full meaning of the scene, so that he can then retain in his mind the most vivid, the most startling impressions of human relationships.

It is perhaps relevant at this point to examine in some detail examples which Doderer takes of two main types of short story.

The first story is Wilhelm Schäfer's "Im letzten D-Zugwagen",⁽¹⁾ which was based on a newspaper account of an incident which actually took place:

(1) Wilhelm Schäfer: "Im letzten D-Zugwagen", from Anekdoten, Gesamtausgabe, München, 1943, vol. 2, p.269.

a train runs over a horse which has strayed on to the line. The train is brought to a stop. While it is standing there, another train smashes into it, crushing the last coach to destruction.

The beginning and the end of the story are closely related, the minor misfortune giving rise to the major. We are taken into the last compartment just prior to the first crash, at which panic threatens to erupt. The passengers are a varied group, presented completely objectively and without any individuality: the red miller, the pale mother, the man in the fur coat, the student, the minister in black (who is the only one to comprehend and heed the warning).

The situation is already a tense one, but relief at the news that the accident is not serious, sets tongues in motion and discussion seeks to dispel anxiety - the threatening figure of death being rendered harmless, philosophised away or simply thrust aside, depending on the viewpoint of the speaker, until the student, goaded by the admonitions of the minister, bursts out with his brash wager: 'I'll bet I'm alive tomorrow - a year from now - twenty years from now!'

This false confidence in life contrasts sharply with the situation in fact where the wheels of death are already in motion and it is ironical that the churchman, who should be most sure of salvation, shows the greatest fear of death.

In structure, the story can be compared with Poe's "Mask of Red Death" (1842). After the initial panic of uncertainty, there follows a feeling of security which makes the final catastrophe all the more frightening.

Nothing that the characters can do will alter the outcome of the story in any way. They are affected by the course of events, but they have no

part in the shaping of those events. Doderer classifies this type of story as Handlungstyp, because the plot holds the interest and runs its own course.

He then goes on to speak of the story "Alte Männer".⁽¹⁾ Here a 'new-comer' is brought into a home for old people, somewhere on the Rhine. He becomes mistrustful of those who have been there for some time, and who seem to take pleasure in passing on to him, as the 'new boy', all the stupid, irritating daily household tasks to do. He is a widely-travelled man of experience and his only physical handicap is a crippled hand. Suddenly he realises that he has no need of this ante-room to the grave, so he leaves it.

Doderer says:⁽²⁾ "Hier ist sich also der Mensch seiner Lage vollaufbewusst. Er nimmt sein Schicksal in die Hand. Für den Leser mag die undeutende Handlung uninteressant sein, wichtig und zentral aber ist die Haltung des Menschen'.

Here the outcome of the story depends on the behaviour of the characters. How they act determines how the story will end. This therefore is the Haltungstyp.

Another excellent and well-known example of this kind of story is "Die Eberjagd" by Ernst Jünger.⁽³⁾ In this case the story is told from the viewpoint of Richard, taking part in a boarhunt on which, with another inexperienced youth, he is posted by the head forester to one of the less likely points in the forest from which a boar might emerge.

Richard falls into a daydream in which he finds himself helpless and

(1) W. Schmidtbonn: "Alte Männer", in Uferleute: Rheinische Geschichten, Berlin, 1921, 2. Auflage.

(2) Klaus Doderer: Die Kurzgeschichte in Deutschland, Wiesbaden, 1953, p.51.

(3) Ernst Jünger: "Die Eberjagd", Werke Bd. 9, Stuttgart, 1952, pp. 299-308.

ineffective. The daydream becomes reality when a huge boar suddenly bursts unexpectedly between Richard and his companion.

In the confusion and panic of the moment caused by the sight of this huge, uncontrollable and terrifying beast, both boys are for an instant paralysed. Then, apparently much too late, the second boy raises his rifle and fires blindly after the disappearing boar. The head forester appears and castigates the boy for his uselessness, the hunt now being apparently ruined.

Somebody then finds the boar, shot through the heart, and the whole situation alters at once. The boy becomes the hero of the hour, while Richard 'lernte hier zum ersten Male, dass Tatsachen die Umstände verändern, die zu ihnen führen - das rüttelte an seiner idealen Welt'.

In the acclaim for what is really a lie, Richard's companion quickly turns to good account what was purest chance. He himself begins to believe in his skill - everyone else believes it, because of the successful outcome.

The course of this whole story hinges on the one action by the boy, and on his quickness then in turning it to his advantage. His behaviour therefore influences the entire action of the story, which would make it a good example of Doderer's Haltungstyp.

Technically, it is also important in this particular story to note how the opening sentence takes the reader right into the action of the story: 'Die Schützen hatten sich längs der Schneise aufgestellt'. Further, the fact that the moment of helplessness in the daydream is followed by a similar moment in reality lends depth to the reality of the story.

The assessment which Doderer makes of the situation between the Novelle

and the short story is both accurate and fair, but in his sub-division of the short story into two main types, he either goes too far or not far enough.

His initial distinctions were between Novelle and short story, so no further division was here necessary, and in making the short story fall into a broad division of two main types of Handlung or Haltung, it would then be logical to follow up by indicating the infinite range of secondary possibilities within these two groups.

However, in viewing the emergence of the short story as a form at all, both Doderer and Zierott, writing in the 1950's, are in a better position than their predecessors to see in perspective and to give a more balanced judgment. In this context it is interesting that Max Hoffmann sets out in an article as far back as 1903 requirements - for the Skizze, it is true - which apply admirably to the short story.⁽¹⁾ He says of the Skizze: 'sie ist ein im kleinsten Rahmen ausgeführtes, vollständig fertiges Gemälde, in dem häufig eine selten wiederkehrende Stimmung, eine merkwürdige Situation, eine sonderbare Begebenheit festgehalten ist'.

Hoffmann uses the three words Stimmung, Situation, Begebenheit in his requirements for the sketch and these now form the basis for the modern short story.

(1) Max Hoffmann: "Die Skizze", Das literarische Echo, Jahrgang 5, Heft 17. 1. June, 1903.

C) HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 19th CENTURY

From a point more than halfway through the twentieth century, it should be possible to view the nineteenth in perspective and to see clearly what perhaps could not be seen at all at the turn of the century. It is true that the short story did not emerge very readily from the break between Romanticism and Realism, but it is quite clear now that it did appear in fact, if not always in name, throughout the century.

E.T.A. Hoffmann, as well as supplying an abundant source of material for the Americans in their early tales, is also widely accepted as the 'father' of the modern short story in Germany; Doderer takes his "Ritter Glück" as an early example. Another is "Das Fräulein von Scudéri" (1819). Johann Peter Hebel with his Schatzkästlein des rheinischen Hausfreundes, published in 1811, had already shown many elements of short story material.

The place of Georg Büchner's "Lenz" has been widely debated. It would appear to be neither Novelle nor Erzählung - indeed Polheim⁽¹⁾ makes a point (pp. 77-78) of showing how Joachim Müller quotes "Lenz" as an example of the Erzählung then uses this as a basis for argument, while others, like Walter Silz (in his Theorie und Kunst der deutschen Novelle, Deutschunterricht Jg. 11, 1959, Heft 5) quote it in the same way as a Novelle.

Both Doderer and Ruth Lorbe accept it as a 'short story'. As a rule it is regarded as a Novellenfragment. Can this be the case? The theme is not an event of extraordinary, unique nature; there is no climax, no turning-point in the sequence of narration; the development of plot - if such it can be called - is devious and complex, following a sequence of situa-

(1) Karl Konrad Polheim: Novellentheorie und Novellenforschung; Stuttgart, 1965.

tions in which reality and dreamlike fantasy intertwine to represent the growing madness of Lenz, in an uneven progression of moods. The background is terrifying and fear-inspiring. To bring realism to fantasy, the symptoms of disease are described with an almost clinical objectivity, and through the personal agony of Lenz we see the universality of human suffering.

Büchner makes use of techniques which are looked upon as 'modern' - those of the incomplete sentence, the ellipse and rhythmic expression, so that his narrative is structurally comparable to many modern short stories, and however "Lenz" may be regarded, it shows at least that form and style do not depend upon the era in which the piece is written.

A pattern of 'regional' stories, similar to those in America, continued through the 1850's and 1860's, with Auerbach's Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten from 1843 on, and with the first volume of Gottfried Keller's Leute von Seldwyla in 1856, while several of the stories by Otto Ludwig, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, Theodor Storm and indeed Keller's own Züricher Novellen are difficult to classify as Novellen because they are moving away from the Novelle proper towards the short story, both in their structure and their treatment of the material.

Klaus Doderer⁽¹⁾ compares Storm's "Posthuma" (1849) with "Die Kuh" as being a forerunner of the short story proper, and indeed he might have gone so far as to say that it is a short story, although a modern writer would probably have concentrated on the scene between the lovers, then brought the funeral and the grave in as an ending with an impact.

(1) Klaus Doderer: Die Kurzgeschichte in Deutschland, Wiesbaden, 1953, p.82.

The movement away from the traditional form of Novelle was continued by individual writers through the century, and when we enter the last decade or so, we can select from many stories and many authors.

In 1889 Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf brought out their Papa Hamlet collection. The third story of the collection, called "Ein Tod"⁽¹⁾ is quoted by Jethro Bithell⁽²⁾ as an example of Sekundenstil, which he defines as 'a style which laboriously produces the impression of every ticking second of time; it is a minute notation of trains of thought and sensuous impressions'.

In "Ein Tod", unfinished sentences and the suggestion of unspoken words give the impression of time dragging by, as a group of students wait at the death-bed of a comrade wounded in a duel.

The introduction of Sekundenstil is an important innovation at this time, because in it can be seen the seeds of the modern psychological story, the thought-by-thought narrative and ultimately of such an extreme form as the discontinuous prose of Jürgen Becker.

From the last ten years of the century a selection might be made of stories with the sardonic or even cynical content which typified the period. For example, we find Tim Kröger's Eine stille Welt; Otto Julius Bierbaum's Studentenbeichten, giving vignettes of student life; regional stories such as Lebensstücke and Feierabend und andere Münchner Geschichten by Anna Croissant-Rust; Gerhart Hauptmann's Bahnwärter Thiel; then Vom gastfreien Pastor, written with a certain humour by Otto Erich Hartleben, whose own

(1) Arno Holz und Johannes Schlaf: "Ein Tod", Papa Hamlet, Leipzig, 1889.

(2) Jethro Bithell: A Companion to German Studies, London, revised edition, 1955, pp.289/90.

domestic arrangements were complicated by his living with two wives; furthermore, Georg von Ompeda, a writer on a decadent theme, who lacked perhaps the ruthlessness of Nietzsche but followed rather after Maupassant in his situations of piquancy and abnormality, which still - by comparative standards - fall within the bounds of sanity, produced his Leidenschaften, which have a certain sardonic humour. (Later, in 1899 he takes a Maupassant theme of artistic ambition frustrated by the limitations imposed by marriage, in his Philister über Dir, which should be compared with Maupassant's En Famille.)

The year 1896 marks the appearance of Ricarda Huch, whose style in her treatment of religion especially, is reminiscent of Gottfried Keller.

Johannes Schlaf wrote "Sommertod" in 1897, followed by "Leonore" and "Die Kuhmagd", with "Frühlingsblumen" in 1901.

Thomas Mann brought out his Der kleine Herr Friedemann in 1898, then Tristan in 1903 - two collections with some excellent stories.

These are versatile writers of ability who span the nineteenth century and enter the twentieth. They all wrote stories which can be classified as 'short stories', but although these stories may be examined as products of their time, for example in the sardonic or grotesque fantasy of the 1890's, it is not possible to see in them any continuity of development in regard to form or technique, because there was in Germany no general movement as such away from traditional writing, so that Hans Halm, in his study of the Russian short story,⁽¹⁾ says that the nineteenth century short story represented an international movement in which three masters emerged - Poe, Maupassant and Chekhov - but that the Germans could supply no writer of note

(1) Hans Halm: Forschungen zur neuen Literaturgeschichte, Weimar, 1933, p.4.

in this abbreviated form of literature.

This was of course true, but why should it have been? Consider the situation elsewhere: Mark Twain in America, Maupassant in France, Chekhov in Russia, Kipling in England were all in demand. Editors of periodicals or newspapers were anxious to publish their work; the public was eager to read it.

Any writer at any age in history is conditioned by the way his work is received. In the nineteenth century the first comment was by the critics followed by the reading public, or by the reading public followed by the critics. Charles Dickens went so far as to publish his own Household Words as a vehicle for his work, until it was established, while the voracious reading public in Russia demanded more and more of Chekhov's work.

What was the position in Germany? Here the reluctance of editors and literary critics to break away from the traditional Novelle which had already reached such a peak of achievement and which still enjoyed such academic prestige, meant that no writer would commit himself to a form which he knew would be coldly received. A writer's reputation in nineteenth century Germany was founded on academic rather than 'popular' recognition, and editors as well as writers were well aware of this fact.

Short story output was therefore limited, and experiment spasmodic, but it cannot seriously be denied that the short story did at least exist in Germany throughout the whole of the nineteenth century.

It is this fact of existence which all too often is minimised or even ignored in regard to German literature, and it is ignored by Germans themselves. Although the short story did appear under the shadow - and even under the title - of the Novelle during the nineteenth century, writers of

consequence did contribute directly to the development of the short story by their studies of the form of the Novelle itself.

Paul Heyse wrote over one hundred Novellen in the second half of the century, apart from his translations of the Italian novella, but his real value to literature lies surely in his comments about the Novelle, and in his theories evolved as a result of his study of Boccaccio.

Even in his own time, his Falkentheorie - based upon the importance of the falcon in a Boccaccio story - aroused considerable interest. He maintained that the Novelle should possess only one central conflict, to which the action of the story should always revert. Compare this with the modern concept of the short story. And was it not Chekhov who maintained that if a gun is described hanging on the wall on page one, sooner or later that gun must go off? Hebbel too, possibly by the sheer weight and profusion of his writing on every aspect of man's existence, exerted a greater influence on writing in general - and therefore on the short story as well - than one might expect from an examination of his own stories, although Robert Petsch does state⁽¹⁾: 'Hebbels Kurzgeschichten haben immer wieder Befremden erregt, weil er sie eben als Novellen bezeichnet hat, während sie anekdotisch erfasst und zugeschnitten sind'.

This comment may go a little far, but seems indicative of Hebbel's movement away from the Novelle form.

Hebbel and Heyse, and also Heine in his influence on prose style, did contribute to the theory and hence to the development of the shorter form of writing during the nineteenth century. Yet H.A. Ebing, who of course

(1) Robert Petsch: Wesen und Form der Erzählkunst, Halle, 1942, p.426.

was writing under the difficulties of the 1930's, examines the background to the German short story⁽¹⁾ and names only foreign writers, and furthermore consistently uses the term 'die deutsche Novelle' when dealing with the short story.

Adolf von Grolmann⁽²⁾ speaks of the 'anarchy' of the Novelle in refusing to have any limitations placed upon it during the nineteenth century. He says, as do others, that the Novelle is rambling, long, wordy and leisurely, and that no stories of the nineteenth century are 'short stories' at all, simply because they were all too long.

But every preceding age is long-winded to its successor. Would Walter Scott be accepted now? Would the style of Stevenson, Maupassant and Chekhov defy pruning to conform to present-day requirements? If we compare the stories written in France, America and England in the early nineteenth century with those written in the same countries at the end of the century, the step surely is essentially the same as that from Novelle to Kurzgeschichte.

The main difference between Germany and elsewhere in regard to the short story seems to lie, not in the way the story emerged so much as in the attitude towards it, and towards the Novelle in comparison with it. The way in which editors and critics - far more than writers themselves - have presented the Novelle not only obscures any realistic assessment of the German short story but is also detrimental to the true evaluation of the Novelle itself.

(1) H.A. Ebing: Deutsche Kurzgeschichte, Bochum, 1936. Introduction 4-29; p.32; chap 3; p.131ff.

(2) Adolf von Grolmann: Literarische Betrachtung, Berlin, 1930, p.111.



The 19th century has rightly been termed the age of the Novelle in Germany, and beautiful examples may justifiably be quoted to substantiate this claim (cf. "Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts", "Immensee") but it would be just as wrong to assume that every Novelle by any author must be of outstanding merit simply by being called a Novelle as it is to assume that no short story can possibly contain any literary merit at all just because it is a short story. It also seems odd that the German press was prepared to publish in translation short stories by the thousand from Russia (at one time there were over 6000 Russian stories in translation in Germany), from America, and from France - all with laudatory notices - and yet gave little or no encouragement to Germans themselves to write similar stories.

The press however is blamed for a good deal, and often wrongly. It has been quoted as being the forcing-ground of the short story by determining its length, hence its substance, hence its effect. This is hardly true. When the Novelle reflected the tempo of the age, there was room for it in the periodicals of that age. It was only after the turn of the century, with the quickening tempo of the twentieth century, that there developed an awareness of the art of journalism and journalistic writing in Germany which had not previously existed.

Then there arose the curious situation in which German editors realised the possibilities of the short story, but the writers resented the limits of brevity imposed upon them. Thus, at a time when Chekhov had reached a summit of achievement in his presentation of the short story, perfecting a pattern of development of the entire action towards the surprise ending; when Kipling and O. Henry had brought the journalistic short story to a standard which still serves as a model, German critics sang the praises of

German writers only in regard to the Novelle, and German writers, trying to conform to a moribund art form, yet influenced by the new writing in other lands, fell between two stools.

The fact that German orthography, German syntax, German expression did not, throughout the nineteenth century, prove readily adaptable to brevity of expression, and that, possibly because of that fact, German writers throughout the century were notably given to 'wordiness' in their exposition, may also have been a contributing factor - and a valid enough reason - for their reluctance to attempt the epigrammatic pungency of the short story as compared with the less urgent narrative of the Novelle, for while narrative as such may not be the main purpose of the short story, brevity of expression, or at least purposeful, meaningful expression is certainly accepted as being a characteristic feature of it.

D) THE EARLIER 20th CENTURY

As we have already seen (p.25, note 1), the Americans at the turn of the century were interested in the actual technique of writing the short story. They continued, in the early part of the twentieth century to examine the reasons for its development. H. Seidel Canby⁽¹⁾ makes the following point: 'The periodical occupied a foremost place in this country (America) as an agent of literary production. For the American book still lacked prestige at home in the mid-century, while the American magazine, thanks to the advantage of timeliness and local interest, was not so handicapped and even in those days of the serial, it encouraged the production of short stories'.

In Germany, the opposite was the case. In 1912, C. Alphonso Smith wrote on The American Short Story⁽²⁾ where he made these comments:

1. In the United States, books published in the 19th century were almost exclusively by English authors, so native American writers turned eagerly to the short story, because English competition here was not so great.
2. The huge and increasing number of monthly magazines created a corresponding demand for short story material.
3. The vastness of the United States encouraged the growth and extension of the new genre.

These points were not valid in Germany, but a certain stimulus was given to the German short story at the start of the twentieth century, not only by the influence of the American journalistic short story, but, as

(1) H. Seidel Canby: The Short Story in English, New York, 1902, p.281.

(2) C. Alphonso Smith: "The American Short Story" in Die amerikanische Literatur, Berlin, 1912, p.364.

Karlheinz Zierott points out,⁽¹⁾ because an interest in the new, shorter form of writing was probably the natural outcome of an age of technical advance.

In no field of technology had Germany lagged behind, and Zierott refers to words like Schnellzug, Schnellpresse, Schnellphoto, Blitztelegramme, Kurzschrift, Kurzwelle: all of which⁽²⁾ made their appearance at this time, all being indicative of the mood of the time, so that the short story would seem at least not to be out of place.

One of the leading authorities on literature in Germany up to the time of the First World War was Richard M. Meyer, who over the years wrote a good deal, much of which then appeared in his massive Weltliteratur im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, Stuttgart / Berlin, 1913.

Reference has already been made (p.3 p.26, p.36) of some of Meyer's views on the short story, and although they may now seem dismissive, they can at least be accepted as valid expressions of opinion based on a very wide knowledge of the literature of the previous century.

Later opinions in Germany were less balanced and more vituperative, but it is interesting to follow the pattern of criticism through this century, up to the period immediately after the Second World War, in order to contrast the attitudes of critics towards the short story before and after this war, and also to enable us to form some idea at least of the difficulties under which a free-thinking writer during the 1930's - and there were some in Germany at that time - would have to work.

(1) Karlheinz Zierott: Die Kurzgeschichte in Literatur und Presse, München, 1952, p.72.

(2) *ibid.* p.35.

In the early 1920's a great deal of American material appeared in translation in Germany - Hemingway, Saroyan, Sherwood Anderson - indicating developments in writing technique and form unfamiliar to most Germans.

In 1926, Martin Rockenbach⁽¹⁾ attempted to trace the development of the short story purely from the novel, comparing the span of the novel in its spread and detail with the short story, which as we have seen he views as a novel in miniature, a 5-minute novel, in which all the ingredients of a full-length novel are compressed but present. This view may underline the uncertainty with which the short story was seen at that time.

In 1927, Paul Zincke⁽²⁾ wrote critically of writers who were technically untrained: 'Nur der Dichter glaubt ein Vorrecht zu haben. Ohne Schulung, ohne technische Studien, ohne praktische Erfahrung, ja oft ohne Kenntnis der einfachsten grammatischen und metrischen Regeln setzt er sich hin und lässt in heller Begeisterung seiner Feder freien Lauf'.

Arnold Hirsch pointed to the confusion which he said arose from misconceptions as to the role of the Novelle itself, of which too much was expected.⁽³⁾ Adolf Grolman agreed with Hirsch⁽⁴⁾ in maintaining that too much had been imposed on the 'light, flexible, agreeable form of the Novelle' and went further in saying that the Novelle was 'structurally inadequate' for these demands.

But Grolman had more to say. He pointed out that writers were not producing something which at best could only approximate to the artistic

(1) Martin Rockenbach: Wege nach Orplid, München Gladbach/Köln, 1926, vol.15, p.1.

(2) Paul Zincke: Paul Heyeses Novellentechnik, Karlsruhe, 1927, p.9.

(3) Arnold Hirsch: 'Der Gattungsbegriff Novelle', Germanische Studien, Heft 64, Berlin, 1928, pp.1-158.

(4) Adolf von Grolman: Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde, Heft 10, 1929, pp.604-627.

form of the old Italian, and - with a sidelong glance at the short story - that German writers were tending more to the Anglo-American example than to what he termed the Gallo-Romanic. The short story, said Grolman, had, like the Novelle, one climax, but this in the short story was calculated to one moment, and when that moment was reached, the story was gone. The Novelle, requiring above all time and space, could not compete with this brutal desire for brevity of expression, and it was this fact which would preclude the Novelle from ever becoming a 'popular' form. The Novelle was no longer suited to the requirements of present-day publications.

Felix Langer maintains that the artistic in the short story lags behind its material effect, which should be to entertain, amid the stresses of everyday life. This must demand a certain pattern of presentation and a planning to meet the requirements of the market, which, Langer declares, must detract from its potential as pure art, which cannot be so regimented.

He then goes further⁽¹⁾ when he says: 'Man könnte aus einer vollendeten Novelle keinen Roman machen, weil sie selbst ihren Stoff vollständig erschöpft, im Gegensatz zur Kurzgeschichte, die wie Goethe von dem abrupten Schluss eines Gedichts sagte"einen Stachel im Herzen zurücklässt, und die Phantasie ist angeregt, sich alle Möglichkeiten auszubilden, die nun folgen können '. Langer has two further comments to make on the short story:

- a) 'Die Kurzgeschichte ist eine Art stenoepischer Vermittlung problematischer Verknotungen von an sich alltäglichen Ereignissen, die durch mehr oder weniger zufällige Einwirkungen zu besonderer Beachtung drängen, ohne aber die Weiterentwicklung

(1) Felix Langer: "Die Kurzgeschichte" in Die Literatur, Jg.32, 1930, p.613.

des grossen Zeitstromes, dessen Partikel ihre Vorgänge sind, durch Anspruch auf monumentale Endgültigkeit des in ihr Möglichen zu verhindern'.

- b) Later he summarises his views thus: 'Die Kurzgeschichte als Ware ist eine Art literarischen Rauschgiftes, dessen Nebenwirkung wichtiger ist, als sein künstlerischer Hauptzweck'.

Hans Martin Elster seeks in vain in the short story any moral-spiritual strength or artistic discipline, but finds in 50 - 150 lines that 'Der albernste Quatsch, die leerste Heuchelei, die dümme Umweltromantik - kurzum: die entsetzlichste Verlogenheit macht sich hier breit'.⁽¹⁾

Werner Mahrholz not only defines the short story as a 5-minute novel crammed into 30 - 300 lines - but he then quotes Hemingway as an example!⁽²⁾

Walter Vark says bluntly: 'Was nun die Kurzgeschichte betrifft, so können wir uns sehr kurz fassen: ihre 'Kürze' entspringt keiner stofflichen oder ideellen Formgesetzmässigkeit, sondern lediglich dem äusseren Bedürfnis heutiger Menschen, zeitliche, sonst unausgefüllte Lücken..... mit einem Happen Sensation zu füllen'.⁽³⁾

These comments were made in the 1930's however, and by 1937 books had been publicly burned, Thomas Mann was no longer a German, those who remained in Germany wrote only on the safest of themes, and critics cried for a return to the Novelle.

Ernst Hermann Pichnow puts some blame on the press for tempting writers away from more serious writing⁽⁴⁾: 'Möglich, dass der eine und

(1) Hans Martin Elster: Die Horen, no.8/9, Jg. 6, 1930, p.708.

(2) Werner Mahrholz: Deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart, Berlin, 1931, p.430.

(3) Walter Vark: Die Form in der Novelle, Münster, 1930 (Diss.) p.52.

(4) Ernst Hermann Pichnow: "Novelle und Kurzgeschichte", in Deutsche Presse, 1937, no.23, pp.194-197.

andere Schriftsteller noch einen kurzen oder langen Kampf zwischen seiner inneren Berufung, seinem Charakter und den winkenden grossen Honoraren ausfechtet, aber dann wird doch eines Tages das leidige Geld siegen...'. But he does admit: 'Keinesfalls soll damit die nur unterhaltende, leichte Erzählung ausgeschaltet und die Kurzgeschichte an sich mit Schnellpost in die Hölle befördert werden....'.

And he finishes with a plea for the return of the Novelle: 'Darum muss die Forderung nach mehr Platz für die Novelle (Literatur) und auch ihre bessere Bezahlung erhoben werden!'.

In the next number of the same magazine, Hein Hausmann⁽¹⁾ disagrees with 'this artificial solution' and claims that such a method would result only in a lot of rubbish being published as Novellen instead of Kurzgeschichten. He complains that in the short story the artistic is constantly being thrust into the background, while art itself is deteriorating into a question merely of ways and means, with the artist a salesman and dealer.

Hans Brandenburg continues on the same theme, with the dismissive comment: 'Die sogenannte Kurzgeschichte befriedigt lediglich Bedürfnisse der Zeitung, der Zeitschrift und des Rundfunks und ist nach dem Gebrauch in der Regel wieder versunken und vergessen'.⁽²⁾

These comments were pre-war. In America shortly afterwards the following distinctions were made: The 'tale' was described⁽³⁾ as being a

(1) Hein Hausmann: "Niedergang der Kurzgeschichte - fehlendes Verantwortungsbewusstsein", Deutsche Presse, 1937, no.24 p.381/2.

(2) Hans Brandenburg: "Die Kunst der Erzählung", Die neue Literatur, Jg.39, 1938, p.275.

(3) Hard, Kirk and Marcoux: Writing and Reading English Prose, New York, 1941, p.331.

leisurely-moving narrative of incidents, loosely strung together, with little attention to character and with no real plot'. And it was said of the narrative: 'In the simple narrative there is no closely-knit plot....the order is chronological rather than logical, sequential rather than consequential... ..'. (1)

Then the writer goes on: '.... but only a writer with good judgment, knowledge of life and possessed of an artistic restraint can produce a really good short story.'

In German, Wilmot Haacke makes the point about the Erzählung, which he says is:'nichts weiter als ein schlichter und mit bescheidenen Mitteln erzählter Bericht irgendeines Vorfalls.... Erzählen ist einfach. Die Darstellung des Erzählers ist kunstlos. Sie steht dadurch im Gegensatz zu dem wohlüberlegten, bewusst durchkomponierten Handlungsaufbau der Novelle.' (2)

The same writer later goes on to give the following comment on the short story (3): 'Eine Kurzgeschichte ist meist nur eine heruntergedruckte Novelle, die in den Raum, den die Zeitung für sie übrig lässt, gequetscht werden muss, und demnach von Natur aus ramponiert erscheint'.

He then goes on to state that 99% of the writers of short stories have no name of any literary worth, comparing them to hack writers, unknown to the public and despised by the editors.... 'Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte ist durch schnellschreibende Männer und Frauen, deren Namen hier - um sie zu schonen - nicht genannt seien, so heruntergewirtschaftet worden, dass sich

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- (1) Watt, Cargill and Charvat: New Highways in College Composition, New York, 1943, p.222/223.
 (2) Wilmot Haacke: Feuilletonkunde, Leipzig, 1944, vol.2, p.484.
 (3) *ibid.*, p.505.

zahlreiche Dichter, Schriftsteller und Journalisten von Rang schämen, sich mit dieser Gattung überhaupt zu befassen'.

Believing there could be no true artists among the writers of short stories, he maintained that these were themselves unrealistic, with puppet characters in a world of make-believe.....

The world of make-believe did not exist only in the short stories of the time. One year after the above statements had been published, Germany itself lay in ruins around the bunker of Berlin. The land was occupied from all sides, and then, after the destruction came at least partial reconstruction, not only of towns and villages, but also of the structure of government, of education, of the press.

An entire generation of Germans who had grown up restricted by decree and by censorship of all publications suddenly found themselves faced by an increasing flood of American newspapers and American magazines whose availability inevitably produced an immediate and eager reaction.

Ernst Schnabel, using the word 'Story' to cover the short story, says: 'Es wäre falsch, anzunehmen, dass die Story sich auf irgendwelche Stoffe, Milieus, die Gegenwart oder die Einheit von Ort und Zeit etwa beschränken müsse, um nicht den Rahmen ihrer Form zu sprengen. Ihre Möglichkeiten sind vielmehr unendlich; jedenfalls ist bislang ein Ende noch nicht abzusehen. Es gibt die historische Story so gut wie die andere, Die grossen Erscheinungen an den Grenzen des Lebens werfen ihre Schatten in die Story: die Geburt, der Tod, die Liebe, der Hunger, Gott..... Es gibt kein Ende der Möglichkeiten!'⁽¹⁾

(1) Ernst Schnabel: "Die amerikanische Story" in Nordwestdeutsche Hefte, Heft 3, Hamburg, 1946, pp.25-28.

Schnabel finishes by saying: 'Das ist die Story. Eine amerikanische Form der erzählenden Prosa. Vielleicht wird der Tag kommen, an dem sie nicht mehr nur Amerika gehören wird. Sondern Europa so gut wie der ganzen Welt'.

It was in this same year of 1946 that Rowohlt published for the first time a monthly magazine called 'Story', adding initially in the title Erzähler des Auslands. Later when German writers began to appear in its pages, this was changed to Erzähler aus aller Welt.

The magazine consisted entirely of short stories, and in the year 1950 published in successive months articles concerning the short story in general.

(1) In March 1950, Carl Zuckmayer writes: 'Die short story kann im literarischen Bereich, ausserhalb der reinen Unterhaltungsliteratur, eine Rolle spielen, wie in gewissen Kulturepochen Europas das lyrische Gedicht oder die Ballade.... Ich glaube, dass sie für die Entwicklung neuer europäischer, besonders auch deutscher Literatur von höchstem Anregungswert sein kann'.

(2) The following month, William Peden asks "What is a short story?" and points out that 'short' is a comparative term which can cover a range from 100 - 25,000 words. A short story averages under 5000 words and Poe's requirement that it should be short enough to be read at a sitting is still valid. But a better criterion for Peden is the compactness with which the theme and the idea are developed, along with the intensity of mood. Some stories revolve round a conflict, its crisis and its resolution: others give an impression only of life, crisis being replaced by a moment of insight

(1) Carl Zuckmayer: in Story, 5 Jg. Heft 3, March, 1950, Rowohlt.

(2) William Peden: in Story, 5 Jg. Heft 4, April, 1950, Rowohlt.

into the character and being of the central figure; by the symbolism of a given situation; or simply by some human fact of relationship..... In any case, the short story offers an almost inexhaustible wealth of themes and forms.

In the third article of the series, Professor Dr. Fritz Martini is much more lyrical. 'Was ist das für ein springlebendiges, unbändiges und aufregendes Ding, das sich unter dem Namen Story, zu deutsch Kurzgeschichte, in die Literatur eingeschmuggelt hat? Es ist nun so mächtig und beliebt geworden, dass es seine sehr viel vornehmeren und selbstbewussteren Verwandten, die man Novelle, Anekdote, Legende nennt, immer mehr in den Hintergrund schiebt.... Ihr geistiger Vater ist das Lebenstempo der modernen Zivilisation.... Die Story bedeutet... ein klares, scharfes Sehen und Erfassen, den unbeirrten Sinn für das Wesentliche, einen Realismus, der um Hintergründiges weiss.... Die Kurzgeschichte ist eine Erzählung, die auf kürzestem Weg zur grössten Wirkung eilt.... Nur ein Gesetz entscheidet unerbittlich über ihr Lebensrecht: Sie müssen wirklich kurze Geschichten sein'.⁽¹⁾

And again, Professor Dr. Hans W. Eppelsheimer makes the comment that in Germany there are many writers - he uses the term Dichter - who do not in any way consider the short story beneath their dignity, and who are indeed glad to be numbered amongst the writers of short stories.⁽²⁾

The most colourful description perhaps comes from C.W. Ceram⁽³⁾ who says: '... eine literarische Form... die nicht nur unserer atomischen

(1) Prof. Dr. Fritz Martini: "Begegnung mit der Story" in Story, 5 Jg. Heft 5, May 1950, Rowohlt.

(2) Prof. Hans W. Eppelheimer: in Story, 5 Jg. Heft 6, June 1950, Rowohlt.

(3) C.W. Ceram: in Story, 5 Jg. Heft 8, August 1950, Rowohlt.

Welt entspricht, sondern einen qualitativen Kern zu bilden vermag.... jede gute story ist ein mit dem literarischen Messer herausgeschnittenes lebendiges Stück Fleisch der Zeit'.

Each of these articles appeared as leaders in Story, whose policy was to interest readers in the short story in general,⁽¹⁾ but it was not only in this magazine that the short story was the subject of comment.

Paul Fechter, writing in the same year, made the statement: 'Sie ist die Form, die die Novelle im Laufe ihrer Wanderschaft von Florenz nach New York angenommen hat'.⁽²⁾ And from Emil Belzner came the sad reflection: 'Die Kurzgeschichte wurde allerdings in den letzten hundert Jahren in Deutschland sehr vernachlässigt, um so mehr aber in den angelsächsischen Ländern zur Blüte gebracht'.⁽³⁾

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- (1) It is perhaps interesting to consider the contents of the early Story magazines, e.g. in Heft 3 (Autoren aus aller Welt) there are stories by Hemingway, Alberto Moravia, Graham Greene, Mackinlay Kantor (USA), Walter Georg Hartmann (Germany), Patricia Ledward (England), Simenon (France), Bruno Scorpone (Italy), N. Tichonov (USSR).
- (2) Paul Fechter: Kleines Wörterbuch für literarische Gespräche, Gütersloh, 1950, p.286.
- (3) Emil Belzner: "Die Kurzgeschichte", Rhein/Neckar Zeitung, 8th August, 1950.

CHAPTER 3 : THE POSTWAR PERIODA) GENERAL

The tremendous impetus which the short story found in the immediate aftermath of war is comparable to that which took place in America a hundred years before. In Germany however, in a closer-knit community bound by the ties of common experience, the spread was even more rapid than it had been on the other side of the Atlantic.

The abundance of material now at the disposal of the German people, both in the original and then, increasingly, in translation ranged in quality from the highest levels of literature to the lowest. The Germans read it all.

Inevitably, it was the youth of the country, the young and the eager who became enthusiastic. The attitude of the older, the jaded and jaundiced generation was understandably different. They had lived through an emotional and physical maelstrom and were now faced with seemingly insuperable problems of housing, providing for families, repairing broken lives and somehow restoring a political, economic, moral, social and psychological norm to their existence.

Behind them and around them lay the shards of experience. The years which had gone before made them reluctant to speak, let alone write, but anyone who wished was soon to be able to write without inhibition of what had gone before - and this was a freedom hitherto denied them. For some, there was not much time - Borchert died in 1947 after only two years of intensive writing - but for others it was the start.

The Wirtschaftswunder of the early 1950's built affluence out of poverty and despair - an affluence eagerly accepted by the young, viewed with mistrust by the middle-aged, misunderstood by the old. The Press became

re-established, radio networks increased their output and their range, and the new medium of television came upon the scene.

Then came the point when affluence was taken for granted, family holidays abroad in the summer, ski-trips in the winter, paid for by long and erratic hours of intense work. The whole tempo of living became faster, more urgent - and there was a sharp increase in the incidence of "Manager=" or "Direktorenkrankheit".

In the early 1950's only the optimistic among men looked forward to the 1960's : now we look ahead to the 1980's. The shadow of the Bomb still looms, it is true, but another whole generation has grown up in its shadow, so that its menace no longer has the urgency, or indeed the inevitability, that it appeared to hold ten or fifteen years ago.

All writing reflects to a greater or lesser degree the life which goes on round it, so in an age of insecurity, of change, of movement, of cynicism and of materialism, an age in which the traditions of centuries are being overthrown one by one, an age in which there is apparently no continuity of purpose, divine or otherwise, it would seem that, in Germany at least, writers find in the short story a medium congenial both to their own talent and to the public taste.

Is it not significant that the short story has played so important a rôle in the postwar writing of Germany? The link between what the Germans themselves call the 'shorter prose form' and the conditions created by advanced industrialisation and the new urban society is a very strong one. And if this theme is developed, it can be seen that in fiction the central character generally reflects in no small measure the mental attitude as well

as the moral and material background of his age.

Thus the hero of the nineteenth-century story - and the word 'hero' is used advisedly, in spite of his obvious limitations - is usually supremely confident, self-assured, master of his own destiny (and frequently that of others). The reason is obvious: the nineteenth century was still firmly entrenched in an era of established order, inherited by tradition, to be handed on by tradition. God was in His Heaven, and all, or more or less all, was right with the world.

Where the hero was a tragic figure, it was usually because of some demonic, often inexplicable, inner urge which drove him, in spite of himself and all his brilliant potential, to destruction - but the established order remained.

It was, understandably, the First World War which completely demolished a structure which had seemed at one time likely to endure for ever. Nothing was the same after it. Nor was the revolution restricted to any one country. From all corners of the earth, millions of men had been summoned, willing or unwilling, to endure a cataclysmic experience. Those who survived, returned to find a society and a way of life quite different from the one they had previously known, a society to which they brought cynicism and mistrust, questioning and doubt.

As if that were not enough, those who were conceived during the First War then found themselves embroiled in the Second : their disillusionment represents the disintegration of the last remnants of the old establishment.

Any examination now of the central character appearing in fiction reveals a radical change in presentation. No longer is he an assured, rather

god-like creature moving confidently through a succession of adventures or events towards a triumphant outcome, and leading, as it were, the reader by the hand on the journey. Moral control is less assured, and certainly less admired. Much greater emphasis is placed on uncertainty, on absolution from obligation, on the futility of opposing any mass movement on moral or religious grounds. Power has been removed from all forms of authority, save that of central government, while responsibility is the hot chestnut passed quickly from hand to hand until it is finally dropped and lost.

These negative trends are apparent in every country and in every literature. Yet there are other more positive, though at times equally undefined phenomena peculiar to individual countries because of the problems of those countries: racial unrest in America is in itself already so clearly-defined that the whole nation is aware of it, but it gives rise to a whole network of political, emotional, religious, educational, economic and social issues varying in intensity and degree with the political region and the temperature of the season.

We have already briefly summarised the changing conditions in Germany after the war. Each altering mood since 1945 is reflected by the writing of the period, and particularly by the short story, the study of whose development during this period is to be our main concern.

Obviously it is impossible to take every author who has ever written or is writing a short story and examine him and his work. We must therefore make a selection, and no selection, however carefully it is made and however representative it is intended to be, can be everybody's ideal. How then are we to make our selection here?

If the development of the short story is a continuous and continuing

process, as we believe any form of writing or creative art to be, then one stage must somehow emerge from the previous one, one influence has its effect and then must give way to another, one author or one generation of authors will inevitably be replaced by the next.

In 1945 Germany made a new beginning in writing as in everything else, and the first people to write were those who most urgently had something to say. Bitterness was not enough, there were thousands of embittered men and women in Germany in 1945, but bitterness was there, the bitterness of experience, not simply of defeat in war. In those early writers there was too a certain moral fire, a fervour akin to a religious zeal, a sense of debt and responsibility to those who had died and also to those who were still alive, who were to make their lives anew - but not, and not under any circumstances, along the lines of the old ones.

The first of the writers then whom we shall study in greater detail were themselves allied by experience. Each had served, each had suffered, two had been imprisoned. They are : Wolfgang Borchert, Heinrich Böll and Wolfdietrich Schnurre.

These are three writers who, for many, have been the platform on which to build. Their influence has been very considerable. They, along with Gerd Gaiser, whom we shall also study in some detail, are all 'involved' writers, mature, experienced men.

Following them are those whose writing developed during the 1950's, the generation which grew up after the war, and which in no way shares the 'Schuldgefühl' of their elders, but views the world with the stern eye of postwar maturity. Young men such as Martin Walser, Siegfried Lenz and Klaus Roehler - also 'involved' writers, who still have much to contribute

to literature in general and to the short story in particular.

On the distaff side, Elisabeth Langgässer was the first woman writer to re-establish herself after the war, and she was followed in the early days of the Gruppe 47 by Ilse Aichinger, then later by Ingeborg Bachmann - three at least of the leading women writers of the postwar years whose work we shall consider.

Before any of these however, let us first examine two other writers whose technique or style may have served as a model to a great many of the moderns.

In the historical development of the ~~themes and the~~ technique of modern writing in Germany, and of the short story in particular, two of the most significant influences would appear to be on the one hand Ernest Hemingway and on the other Franz Kafka, two men so totally unlike in character, background and belief, that even to place them side by side seems a contradiction. They do however make a fascinating comparison.

B) THE INFLUENCE OF HEMINGWAY AND KAFKA

In the year 1917, at the age of 18, Hemingway was rejected by the U.S. Army because of poor vision in one eye. In 1918, on Red Cross canteen duty in Italy, he was wounded by a mortar bomb.

The psychological effect of these two happenings is evident in all his writing, troubled as he was in mind and sensibility by war, violence, the Lost Generation, war, sex, death and war again.

The frustration of rejection can be seen throughout his life in his efforts to excel in all things physical - and who has not seen pictures of Hemingway sparring with heavyweights, Hemingway in the bullring, Hemingway the hunter, Hemingway the man of action? His very service in the second world war reads like the script of an American film : Officially a correspondent for "Collier's Weekly" attached to the American Third Army, he found that he disliked General Patton, so attached himself to an American pursuit squadron in Normandy, then to the 4th Infantry Division of the American First Army. Keeping ahead of them in his own jeep, he contacted French irregular forces, set up an HQ at Rambouillet, sent out patrols and collected information - all this as a civilian. Finally there was some controversy as to whether he should be decorated or court-martialled. He was interrogated, acquitted and awarded the Bronze Star.

He looked upon war as the writer's greatest experience, and for him, it was. Probably because he was never nearer than the fringe, his feelings to war were those of two hundred years ago. Only perhaps Ernst Jünger in the early 1920's seems to find a similar satisfaction in war (In Stahlgewittern). No other 'war writer' anywhere else - Sassoon, Remarque, Graves, Williamson, Borchert, Böll, Schnurre - has a comparable feeling.

Yet in his actual writing of war, he has a good deal in common with other writers, especially of the first war. He examines the reactions of men to fear, to death, and he compares the soldier with the politician - usually to the latter's disadvantage, as did the others.

Hemingway's curiously naive uncertainty, based as it was upon the belief that you cannot know what you really feel, because what you have been taught to feel must necessarily be false, still does not prevent his instinctive creative perception from enabling his characters to catch moral truths about the bravery, constancy and dedication of man, about the cruelty, indifference and selfishness of man and even of the wrongness of death itself which ends man's value and potential. In his continued character Nick Adams we feel the pulse reacting to life, and there is a sense of life as chaotic as experience itself (cf. In Our Time, 1924).

Hemingway's hero is essentially a man alone, and Hemingway's power as well as his uncertainty comes at least in part from this romantic isolation. Always there is a subjective, autobiographical meditation allied to an objective observation. Throughout his life Hemingway and his central characters are identifiable and it would seem that he could not or would not distinguish between his real and his imagined activities. Thus when his own feared inadequacies could be personified (Nick Adams) he wrote as true a cry of lost youth in a lost world as anyone will ever write. The age of each Hemingway hero matches his own at the time of writing - from the Nick of the early short stories to the Old Man of the Sea. His story "Indian Camp" is probably one of the most frightful birth-death stories ever written. A baby is delivered, without anaesthetic by 'Caesarian with a jack-knife' while the baby's father in the upper bunk cuts his throat with a razor.

Hemingway's second son was born by Caesarian, and while Hemingway was re-writing Farewell to Arms, his father committed suicide.

In all his early stories his mood is one of frustration and cynicism. The frustration is obvious even in his titles : Men Without Women; Winner Take Nothing; To Have and to Have Not; Death in the Afternoon; For Whom the Bell Tolls.

For Hemingway all plans are nullified by death - he was long obsessed with the theme of death - and as death is always waiting, hope is a mirage. Everybody dies, but the happy die first. To this early and prolonged cynicism there seems no answer, but as the century aged so did Hemingway, and despair turned into a show of outward courage: the beaten, frustrated youth gradually gives way to the older, undefeated loser. His theme now - that man is caught alone in a world which will destroy him, therefore he can choose either to move numbly in defeat or bravely in invincibility - is one expressing the irony of existence.

Only once does Hemingway apparently come to terms in accepting life and this is in "The Old Man and the Sea", where he has produced within his intellectual limits, which were neither broad nor deep, a positive fable of our time expressed in the language of fact. A man must confront life, bravely take up its challenge even in face of death, in following the course he has chosen or which has been allotted to him. If he does this, he can never be defeated, no matter what he may lose in the struggle. As Hemingway's philosophy at best was shallow, and as he could offer no fiery brand of social reform in his criticisms of society, where does his influence lie? It lies principally in the effectiveness of his style.

As a young student, one of Hemingway's earliest texts was "Old Testament Narratives", and his mature prose contains the element of Biblical repetitive understatement, spaced by the use of and, which helped to reinforce tendencies he showed from the first. He always liked the emphatic power of a limited, repetitive vocabulary and learned with experience how to lengthen the sentence without losing his grasp of the essential contained therein. Although his style may appear casual, indeed almost careless, his effect also lies in his reproducing only what he sees and hears.

By contriving a flatness of tone, in an absence of adjectives he was able to exclude any emotional extravagance, and this alone is effective in writing of disastrous events - "At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera. But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army". (Farewell to Arms).

This is the style of the Kahlschlag exemplified. It is to be found in Böll, in Schnurre, in Borchert, and later in Lenz, but it has been imitated with varying success by many others.

In technique, Hemingway's method is simple in the extreme. He uses homely words, and it is interesting to see how effectively he uses the word 'and' where most would use 'but', as for example in the "Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" : "The car was parallel to the patch of bush. Macomber, Wilson, and the gunbearer got down. Macomber, looking back, saw his wife, with the rifle at her side, looking at him, looking at him. He waved to her and she did not wave back".

The 'and' in the last sentence is unexpected, and very reminiscent of the Old Testament : "I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands".

"...And David went out and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him. And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul....." (Borchert: "...Heiligenschein! dachte er und er hatte keinen, dem er die Fäuste ins Gesicht schlagen konnte".)

Hemingway always found it easier to write in the first person, in spite of the obvious limitations this puts on the narrative, and John Atkins quotes a letter from him in which he says⁽¹⁾: "The first person gives you great intimacy in attempting to give a complete sense of experience to the reader. It is limited however and in the third person the novelist can work in other people's heads and in other people's country. His range is greatly extended and so are his obligations..." Böll too is fond of the first person - e.g. "So ein Rummel"; "Die ungezählte Geliebte"; "Unberechenbare Gäste etc. etc. - although probably not for the same reasons as Hemingway, who so identified himself with his characters, that for him, the story was his story, the action his action, the thoughts his thoughts. This in Hemingway leads on to another characteristic of style, the use of the pronoun 'you' : you feel this, you do that, you learn something else.

This familiar 'you' does not appear in any of the German writers, and is one example of a restriction (for better or worse) imposed by language. Another artifice however used by Hemingway, and also with success by Böll and Schnurre, though not so much by Borchert whose prose is more poetic, is the significant avoidance of the adjective and the adjectival phrase, which heightens the effect of flat, unemotional reporting.

(1) John Atkins: The Art of Ernest Hemingway, London and New York, 1952, p.66.

It is above all in this simplicity of language, especially in dialogue, that Hemingway excels, and in dialogue few Germans can approach him.

The weight of Hemingway's influence then lies in style and technique, both of which can be studied in detail and lend themselves to imitation, either conscious or unconscious. What of Kafka? Certainly no other German writer of this century other than Brecht has exercised a wider influence than he. His significance is unquestioned, but his influence is quite different from that of Hemingway.

As the son of a wealthy Jewish family, Franz Kafka attended university, where at his father's decree he studied law, although his leanings were towards literature. Thereafter he worked first in the family business, then as lawyer to an insurance company - an existence which he must have found inhibiting to his literary ambitions.

The conflict in his stories is the inner conflict of the lonely man - springing probably from his own unhappy relationship with his father, a successful but often insensitive business man, who had neither understanding of nor sympathy for his son's literary interests. Kafka's frail physique, his sensitivity, allied to an uncomfortable sense of duty caused his life inevitably to alternate between periods of frustration and despair in which the dullness of his everyday work may have had a paradoxically tranquillising effect. Throughout his work there is certainly reflected the conflict of a tormented sense of persecution.

Like Hemingway, he can readily be identified with his central characters (e.g. in "Die Verwandlung", for Samsa one could well read Kafka), and the resigned helplessness of his central characters as they struggle, enmeshed by the soulless automation of bureaucracy until they finally perish,

is as surely the resignation of Kafka himself.

This constant motif of isolation and frustration in Kafka has a quality of haunting and indeed haunted subjective sensitivity, where nightmare transformations and grotesque imagery are set against a background of (more or less) rational realism. His psychology is not deep, but he gives his characters a quality of faith, because only faith can overcome logic, and as the logical outcome of a capitalistic bureaucratic system must be the destruction of the individual, faith alone can bring the courage to endure.

For Kafka, the true world was the world of the spirit. Life on earth might seem unbearable, but any other was unattainable.

In his tormented transformations into animals and insects, in his framework of horror and the grotesque, Kafka is often held to be standing in direct line from Hoffmann and Poe. They however wrote specifically in order to curdle the blood of the reader, while Kafka's stories are metaphysically symbolic. Further, in his presentation of man in society, Kafka is much more a social and political critic. Yet he can hardly be regarded simply as a 'political' writer, for unlike Brecht, he offers no political or ideological solution to his problem. He shows the appalling situation of his ordinary man, caught up in an inhuman system, without being able to take, or even to suggest the decisive step to right the obvious wrong.

In regard to diction and style, any typical sentences from Kafka can serve as an illustration :

1. 'Er lag auf seinem panzerartig harten Rücken und sah, wenn er den Kopf ein wenig hob, seinen gewölbten, braunen, von bogenförmigen Versteifungen geteilten Bauch, auf dessen Höhe sich die Bettdecke, zum gänzlichen Niedergleiten bereit, kaum noch erhalten konnte.' This is the second sentence of "Die Verwandlung".

2. 'Es ist eine kleine Frau; von Natur aus recht schlank, ist sie doch stark geschnürt; ich sehe sie immer im gleichen Kleid, es ist aus gelblichgrauem, gewissermassen holzfarbigem Stoff und ist ein wenig mit Troddeln oder knopfartigen Behängen von gleicher Farbe versehen; sie ist immer ohne Hut, ihr stumpf-blondes Haar ist glatt und nicht unordentlich, aber sehr locker gehalten.' Here we have the opening sentence of "Eine kleine Frau".

3. 'Ich war in grosser Verlegenheit: eine dringende Reise stand mir bevor: ein Schwerkranker wartete auf mich in einem zehn Meilen entfernten Dorfe; starkes Schneegestöber füllte den weiten Raum zwischen mir und ihm; einen Wagen hatte ich, leicht, grossrädig, ganz wie er für unsere Landstrassen taugt; in den Pelz gepackt, die Instrumententasche in der Hand, stand ich reisefertig schon auf dem Hofe; aber das Pferd fehlte, das Pferd.' From "Ein Landarzt", this is the opening sentence.

In each of the cases quoted, the construction of the sentence is logical and precise, each point leading on to the next. The sentences are long, with many adjectives and adjectival phrases, and this again is typical of Kafka - his piece entitled "Der plötzliche Spaziergang" contains only two sentences in all, the first being of 224 words. Thus the atmosphere created is often one of brooding anxiety or reflection, and whether this was Kafka's conscious intention or whether it was simply his own natural tendency does not matter, the sentence structure creates the mood of the piece.

Yet Kafka's language is itself in no way obscure. Even in his grotesque scenes (e.g. "Die Verwandlung" or "In der Strafkolonie") he writes in factual terms, and this presentation of metaphysical nightmare in the language of everyday experience is strikingly effective. Furthermore, every word and phrase, as well as every object and action in the story has signifi-

cance. With complete mastery, Kafka integrates into the texture of his narrative apparently insignificant or even meaningless incidents - the father's spectacles in "Das Urteil" - and with complete economy of expression brings an added fullness of meaning.

This is why background description is almost wholly lacking in Kafka - only his novel Amerika has ~~much~~ visual scenery - for Kafka likes to encourage the imagination of the reader, allowing him by his own vision fully to appreciate the implications of the narrative.

Here he differs sharply from Hemingway, whose clarity of descriptive detail adds to the immediacy of the narrative and leaves little room for imagination. Each scene is presented to the reader in the way Hemingway wants him to see it.

The use of dialogue represents another difference of technique between Kafka and Hemingway. For Kafka, dialogue was of very minor importance. "Eine kleine Frau" has no dialogue at all; "Der Bau" has none; "Blumfeld, ein Älterer Junggeselle" has occasional statements by Blumfeld, but no dialogue; and although "Die Verwandlung" is over fifty pages in length, there is very little dialogue in it.

For Hemingway, dialogue was a major technique with which he took endless trouble, because it was not only the words but the implications behind them which were important for him to achieve his full effect.

The contrast in the work of these two writers is remarkable. Hemingway presents in the language of today a philosophy long out of date, while Kafka sets out in the precise diction and style of his legal upbringing a problem which we, living fifty years after him and entering the computer age, are just beginning to appreciate.

Hemingway's influence is on style; Kafka's is on theme. In sounding his prophetic warning he might be likened to Huxley or Orwell, but it is in his treatment of man's metaphysical loneliness in the world which is becoming increasingly real to us that Kafka is especially significant.

Claims have sometimes been made on behalf of one writer or another that he 'writes in the Kafka tradition', and while this may be true, it applies probably to only one aspect of his writing, such as the grotesque, and although, as already mentioned, Ilse Aichinger with "Der Gefesselte" is much akin to Kafka, only Brecht can really compare at all in stature.

c) THE IMMEDIATE POSTWAR PERIOD

Of all the writers of the early postwar period, none made a more immediate impact than Wolfgang Borchert. He was representative of a generation - his 'Generation ohne Abschied' - a homeless, disillusioned, embittered and bewildered generation to whom he gave not only eloquence but a revived sense of purpose, indeed of power.

At the outbreak of war, Borchert was 18 years old, a sensitive youth on whom Army life and early active service made a shattering impact. Six years later, a broken man of 24, he came home to write and to die.

Of Borchert's war stories, Professor Kilchenmann⁽¹⁾ says, somewhat clinically : "Borcherts Erzählungen mögen vom heutigen Standpunkt aus unvollkommen, übertrieben und überlebt sein; eines ist aber sicher: sie entsprachen 1946/47 dem Lebensgefühl der jungen Generation und gaben ihm einen adäquaten Ausdruck." (pp. 163-164)

Few of those who served through a Russian winter campaign will readily admit even the possibility of any exaggeration of conditions there. Borchert himself served there and was wounded, imprisoned and even sentenced to death back in Germany, then his sentence was reduced to one of 'Frontbewährung' - in Russia.

His writing, immature as Professor Kilchenmann may find it, shows sufficient maturity and dignity to refrain from any purely personal outburst in his bitterness. Like Siegfried Sassoon of another war, he cries out, not against his own persecutors, but against the blind, relentless waste of human life, his struggle is against the inhuman, inexorable tide of events, his despair that nobody will stem that tide.

(1) Ruth Kilchenmann : Die Kurzgeschichte, Stuttgart, 1967, pp.163-164.

One story, "Die Hundeblume"⁽¹⁾ reflects his personal experience of imprisonment, presenting with quite admirable technical skill the powerful, cumulative effect of the loneliness, the awful anonymity, the unchanging routine and the persistent fear on the young narrator.

The atmosphere he creates at the outset by the paradoxical finality of the opening sentence : "Die Tür ging hinter mir zu".

For those on the outside, that might have been the end of the story, it often was. But for the prisoner there opens another door : "Eine hässliche Tür mit der Nummer 432."

This is to be the symbol of his new life. Here in this cell he meets the being he comes to know best of all during his imprisonment - his own inner self. Deftly, Borchert shows the effect of sunlight and moonlight reaching in through the high little window into the cell, of the bare walls, of the door, the sequence of night following day causing him to lose track of time, to lose touch with life, with reality.

His jailers remain anonymous harbingers of fear : "Da explodierte ein Bellen um uns und auf uns zu - ein heiseres Bellen von blauen Hunden mit Lederriemen um den Bauch." (p.27)

The daily exercise, round and round, at first brings welcome relief, then it palls until the narrator begins to hate the others who are taking part, especially the man directly in front of him, whose face he has never seen, but on whose heels he stumbles daily:

"Alle Hintermänner hassen ihre Vordermänner" (p.32)

At last he finds a focal point on which to rivet his attention - a dandelion, a point of colour, of new life. He begins to plan how he might pick

(1) Wolfgang Borchert : Das Gesamtwerk, Hamburg, 1949, pp.25-39.

the little flower and take it into his cell, and in the final achievement of this aim he becomes aware in some surprise of the contrast between the youth he once was, much more familiar with the smell of powder, perfume and petrol, of gin and lipstick, and this strange creature now in cell 432 holding a tiny dandelion flower first to the narrow shaft of light and then to his nostrils and finding that in the contemplation of this insignificant flower he can escape his...

"Gefangenschaft, das Alleinsein, den Hunger nach Liebe, die Hilflosigkeit seiner zweiundzwanzig Jahre, die Gegenwart und die Zukunft, die Welt und das Christentum - ja, auch das!" (p.39)

Told in the first person, the complete lack of dialogue in this story enables Borchert not only to convey the brooding atmosphere of loneliness, but also to follow the thought-sequences and the mental processes of the prisoner better than a third-person narrative could have done.

Loneliness, helplessness, the cry of the Cross 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?', despair - all are recurring themes in Borchert's stories of war.

Perhaps his best-known is now "Der viele, viele Schnee", which has become almost a classic expression of the loneliness of man in war. Set in the forests of Russia in winter it is a picture of man, not merely in a war-time situation, but standing as it were on the edge of infinity.

We feel the strange contrasts of the position : "Er stand in einem russischen Wald auf weit vorgeschobenem Posten" (p.172)

Not simply a machine-gun post in the front line, but one which is 'weit vorgeschoben' and in a Russian forest. (This was the kind of position

to which a 'Strafbataillon' might be posted).

All around the sentry lies the boundless, limitless snow, yet he feels enclosed, hemmed in both by the forest and the snow. All around him is the infinity of space, yet when night falls the horizon closes in on him, creeping closer and closer and bringing the sounds which pass unnoticed by day, the gentle sighing of the snow in the trees, the objects close at hand which grow bigger as darkness falls - all the sensations known to every man who has ever stood guard in any war from the beginning of time.

Here the troubles of the sentry, already beset by doubts and fears are increased by the intense cold. Every now and again he has to fire a burst so that the gun will not freeze solid, then in the ensuing silence if he uncovers his ears for more than a few moments, they freeze. If he keeps them covered up, he cannot hear Them coming. No wonder that he sings. And perhaps because of the snow, he sings Christmas carols. Temporarily at least, his fears are allayed.

Then he hears the crack of a piece of wood breaking under a foot and he falls silent, alert, his fears returning, even when he realises it is his sergeant. "Jetzt werde ich erschossen..... Ich habe auf Posten gesungen und jetzt kommen sie und erschiessen mich." (p.174)

And again the unexpected : Not only the sentry has been affected by the surroundings, for when the sergeant arrives, he says:

'Mein Gott. Halt mich fest, Mensch. Mein Gott!! Mein Gott!
Und dann lachte er. Flog an den Händen. Und lachte doch:
Weihnachtslieder hört man schon. Weihnachtslieder in diesem
verdammten russischen Wald. Weihnachtslieder. Haben wir
nicht Februar? Wir haben doch schon Februar. Dabei hört
man Weihnachtslieder. Das kommt von dieser furchtbaren
Stille.....' (p.174)

Thus the near-madness of man on the edge of infinity - Das macht verrückt. Diese ewige Stille. Diese ewige! - An effective use of the word ewig, in its repetition.

At times, in contrast to 'Die drei dunklen Könige' there seems no gleam of hope in Borchert's mind as he writes. In "Die Kegelbahn", two soldiers are beset by a 'Schuldgefühl', and one says to the other:

Aber Gott hat uns so gemacht.

Aber Gott hat eine Entschuldigung, sagte der andere, es gibt ihn nicht. Es gibt ihn nicht? fragte der erste.

Das ist seine einzige Entschuldigung, antwortete der zweite. (p.170)

Or again in the story "Die Katze war im Schnee erfroren" there is a description of a village being burned by German troops. It is night. The red glow of the burning houses silhouettes the inhabitants as they stand watching their homes:

'Einige hatten auch hölzerne Bilder bei sich. Kleine, in gold und silber und blau. Da war ein Mann drauf zu sehen mit einem ovalen Gesicht und einem braunen Bart. Die Leute starrten dem sehr schönen Mann wild in die Augen. Aber die Häuser, die brannten und brannten und brannten doch.' (p.182)

And the title of the story 'Jesus macht nicht mehr mit' reflects very clearly how Borchert himself must have felt, knowing that for him in his 'Frontbewährung' there was no release.

When Draussen vor der Tür was first heard on the radio in February 1947, there arose at once a storm of controversy, correspondence, acclaim, condemnation and above all, discussion. It seemed that none could remain neutral.⁽¹⁾

Borchert himself, who had added to the title Draussen vor der Tür a sub-title which said : 'Ein Stück, das kein Theater spielen und kein Publi-

(1) Wolfgang Borchert : Draussen vor der Tür, in Das Gesamtwerk, Hamburg, 1949.

kum sehen will', was taken aback by the range and the intensity of its reception. By then he must have known that his own days were numbered. He had a bare nine months to live, and by the time the public had fully discussed his play, he was dead.

But his effect, both on his contemporaries and on subsequent writers cannot simply be dismissed as the result of some sentimental adulation or appeal. It is true that there is in much of his work, especially where he expresses the direct and bitter plaint of his generation, that daemonic quality by which youth is driven to destruction, which has always held such fascination for the Germans. Borchert strips it of all romanticism, but the sheer force of his own conviction, the bitterness of his own cry, gives additional strength to his writing, for the daemon lay in Borchert himself, the man who was fey, the man marked out for death.

If Draussen vor der Tür had been the only thing that Borchert wrote, his impact would still have been considerable - think of Richard Hillary and the Last Enemy - but in the very short time at his disposal, he wrote a good deal more. One collection of 'Erzählungen', called An einem Dienstag⁽¹⁾ contains a piece called "Die drei dunklen Könige". It is only 750 words long, but consider its effect :

Er tappte durch die dunkle Vorstadt. Die Häuser standen abgebrochen gegen den Himmel. Der Mond fehlte und das Pflaster war erschrocken über den späten Schritt. Dann fand er eine alte Planke. Da trat er mit dem Fuss gegen, bis eine Latte morsch aufseufzte und losbrach. Das Holz roch müde und süß. Durch die dunkle Vorstadt tappte er zurück. Sterne waren nicht da.

(1) The stories in the collection 'An einem Dienstag' were written between autumn 1946 and summer 1947. They were first published in book form by Rowohlt, shortly after Borchert's death.

Als er die Tür aufmachte (sie weinte dabei, die Tür), sahen ihm die blassblauen Augen seiner Frau entgegen. Sie kamen aus einem müden Gesicht. Ihr Atem hing weiss im Zimmer, so kalt war es. Er beugte sein knöchiges Knie und brach das Holz. Das Holz seufzte. Dann roch es mürbe und süss ringsum. Er hielt sich ein Stück davon unter die Nase. Riecht beinahe wie Kuchen, lachte er leise. Nicht, sagten die Augen der Frau, nicht lachen. Er schläft.

Der Mann legte das süsse mürbe Holz in den kleinen Blechofen. Da glomm es auf und warf eine Handvoll warmes Licht durch das Zimmer. Die fiel hell auf ein winziges rundes Gesicht und blieb einen Augenblick. Das Gesicht war erst eine Stunde alt, aber es hatte schon alles, was dazugehört: Ohren, Nase, Mund und Augen. Die Augen mussten gross sein, das konnte man sehen, obgleich sie zu waren. Aber der Mund war offen und es pustete leise daraus. Nase und Ohren waren rot. Er lebt, dachte die Mutter. Und das kleine Gesicht schlief.

Da sind noch Haferflocken, sagte der Mann. Ja, antwortete die Frau, das ist gut. Es ist kalt. Der Mann nahm noch von dem süssen weichen Holz. Nun hat sie ihr Kind gekriegt und muss frieren, dachte er. Aber er hatte keinen, dem er dafür die Fäuste ins Gesicht schlagen konnte. Als er die Ofentür aufmachte, fiel wieder eine Handvoll Licht über das schlafende Gesicht. Die Frau sagte leise: Kuck, wie ein Heiligenschein, siehst du? Heiligenschein! dachte er und er hatte keinen, dem er die Fäuste ins Gesicht schlagen konnte.

Dann waren welche an der Tür. Wir sahen das Licht, sagten sie, vom Fenster. Wir wollen uns zehn Minuten hinsetzen.

Aber wir haben ein Kind, sagte der Mann zu ihnen. Da sagten sie nichts weiter, aber sie kamen doch ins Zimmer, stiessen Nebel aus den Nasen und hoben die Füsse hoch. Wir sind ganz leise, flüsterten sie und hoben die Füsse hoch. Dann fiel das Licht auf sie. Drei waren es. In drei alten Uniformen. Einer hatte einen Pappkarton, einer einen Sack. Und der dritte hatte keine Hände. Erfroren, sagte er, und hielt die Stümpfe hoch. Dann drehte er dem Mann die Manteltasche hin. Tabak war darin und dünnes Papier. Sie drehten Zigaretten. Aber die Frau sagte: Nicht, das Kind.

Da gingen die vier vor die Tür und ihre Zigaretten waren vier Punkte in der Nacht. Der eine hatte dicke umwickelte Füsse. Er nahm ein Stück Holz aus seinem Sack. Ein Esel, sagte er, ich habe sieben Monate daran geschnitzt. Für das Kind. Das sagte er und gab es dem Mann. Was ist mit den Füßen? fragte der Mann. Wasser, sagte der Eselschnitzer, vom Hunger. Und der andere, der dritte? fragte der Mann und befühlte im Dunkeln den Esel. Der dritte zitterte in seiner Uniform: Oh, nichts, wisperte er, das sind nur die Nerven. Man hat eben zuviel Angst gehabt. Dann traten sie die Zigaretten aus und gingen wieder hinein.

Sie hoben die Füße hoch und sahen auf das kleine schlafende Gesicht. Der Zitternde nahm aus seinem Pappkarton zwei gelbe Bonbons und sagte dazu : Für die Frau sind die.

Die Frau machte die blassen blauen Augen weit auf, als sie die drei Dunklen über das Kind gebeugt sah. Sie fürchtete sich. Aber da stemmte das Kind seine Beine gegen ihre Brust und schrie so kräftig, dass die drei Dunklen die Füße aufhoben und zur Tür schlichen. Hier nickten sie nochmal, dann stiegen sie in die Nacht hinein.

Der Mann sah ihnen nach. Sonderbare Heilige, sagte er zu seiner Frau. Dann machte er die Tür zu. Schöne Heilige sind das, brummte er und sah nach den Haferflocken. Aber er hatte kein Gesicht für seine Fäuste.

Aber das Kind hat geschrien, flüsterte die Frau, ganz stark hat es geschrien. Da sind sie gegangen. Kuck mal, wie lebendig es ist, sagte sie stolz. Das Gesicht machte den Mund auf und schrie.

Weint er? fragte der Mann.

Nein, ich glaube, er lacht, antwortete die Frau.

Beinahe wie Kuchen, sagte der Mann und roch an dem Holz, wie Kuchen. Ganz süß.

Heute ist ja auch Weihnachten, sagte die Frau.

Ja, Weihnachten, brummte er und vom Ofen her fiel eine Handvoll licht hell auf das kleine schlafende Gesicht.

It is astonishing how much can be conveyed by such economy of words in this little story. First, the shattered town, the ruins and the rubble among which people still can live; the tiny room giving shelter and an illusion of warmth to the family; the man, bitter, frustrated and impotent in his anger; his wife, tired, cold, hungry, uncomplaining, her love and care directed toward the child, afraid when the dark figures are bending over him, proud of his strength when he kicks and yells.

As we study the technique of the story, much more emerges, especially perhaps in the use of contrast and comparison which runs throughout the telling. There is the contrast of darkness and a little light, of cold and a little warmth. The suffering of the three in the room is as nothing com-

pared with that of the three who came in out of the darkness. The family is cold, but here is a man with no hands - Frozen off, he said. They were hungry, but here is one whose feet are so swollen that he is a cripple. - Hunger does that, he said. The woman is afraid of the three, yet here is one who trembles all the time. Nerves, he said, from living too long with fear.

On the one hand there is the family - and there is surely no reason to take the biblical analogy as far as Motekat suggests (Interpretationen moderner Prosa, Diesterweg, 1960), by implying that the man is not the father to the child - there is then the man, the woman we presume to be his wife, and their child, who have only a room in a ruin, with a stove, a little warmth, a little light. On the other hand, the three strangers who have so much less and yet who bear gifts. - In the Book of Matthew, Chapter 2, verse 10 : When they saw the star they rejoiced.... Here : Wir sahen das Licht, sagten sie, vom Fenster. The light gleaming in the darkness, suggesting warmth, comfort - presumably they would view it with joy. In Matthew 2, verse 11 : 'When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him.' Here the three also found a child with its mother. True, they did not fall down and worship : this was not God in human form, but an ordinary child. Yet they showed tenderness and compassion, these three who were dressed, not in the silks of the men of old, but with the symbolism of reality, in old uniforms, coming out of the darkness to which they ultimately returned. They still bore gifts - not of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh - but the best of their poor possessions. Christmas, and a handful of light fell on the little sleeping face.

The whole story is symbolic, a parable in modern form. The time is our time, the situation one common to innumerable Germans - it was their darkness and it was their gleam of light.

The simplicity of Borchert's imagery, apparently so effortless, is highly effective. Such phrases as 'Das Pflaster war erschrocken über den späten Schritt'; 'sie weinte dabei, die Tür'; 'Das Holz seufzte'; 'riecht beinah wie Kuchen, lachte er leise'; 'Kuck, wie ein Heiligenschein, siehst du?'; 'ihre Zigaretten waren vier Punkte in der Nacht'; 'eine Handvoll Licht' - the language is not in itself poetic, and the sentences are short, the longest having only 21 words, yet the story contains a strong poetic quality of analogy and parable, which is itself in contrast to the factual realism of the language used - 'Erfroren, sagte er, und hielt die Stümpfe hoch' - and at the end we are left with an impression of hope for the future.

Borchert, when writing this story, knew that he was a dying man, that the Christmas of which he wrote would be his last. To the reader, this afterknowledge brings a heightened sense of tragedy; the gleam in Borchert's darkness must have been very real.

The poetic quality, which must have been an integral part of his own character, and which was now sharpened probably by the feverish energy with which he worked against the shortening time left to him, runs through all his work. Typical of him, it is by no means typical of the period. There was in the rubble of Hamburg, in the depths of squalor in which human beings sought to survive, little of poetry and less of beauty.

Borchert's work is generally held to represent the beginning of the Kahlschlag period in German literature. In his dispassionate, detached

realism, his use of sharp, stark contrast and his unemotional presentation of human catastrophe, he shows all the characteristics of the 'Kahlschlag-literatur', which set out baldly to describe what everyone had survived and was still surviving. In the apparently effortless simplicity of his style, in his use of everyday expression, in his avoidance of all recognisable 'literary' allusion, Borchert belongs to the Kahlschlag. His poetic quality sets him quite apart.

Elsewhere in 1946 and 1947 there was a good deal of what might be called documentary-type writing - memories and accounts of Nazi crimes, of suffering, of KZ - stories whose content was all too familiar.

Little has survived from this time, because there was not much of literary merit, but some of the factual narration of these stories no doubt influenced the 'Kahlschlagliteratur' in its early days, when many of the stories were stories of the moment, vivid pictures of some scene or event indelibly etched on the memory of the author. Many of them possessed considerable quality of exposition. Some went further.

When in the summer of 1947, the periodical Der Ruf called for complete freedom, not only of thought, but also of action in Germany, these demands were, not unnaturally held by the Occupying Powers to be both premature and excessive, and the paper was closed down.

One of the editors however, Hans Werner Richter, met the authors and staff who had contributed to Der Ruf, with a view to founding another paper. The discussion was animated and encompassing, so that although no decision was reached in regard to a new paper, all present felt that the meeting as such had been worthwhile, and agreed to meet again, to discuss not only the

new paper, but also the literary scene in general.

Thus it came about in September 1947, that the meeting took place of the nucleus of what later came to be called the Gruppe 47.

Although literary discussion was really of secondary importance only, it gave writers an opportunity to read their works, hear others reading, discuss their own and other manuscripts, and possibly benefit from what was said. None of those present thought deliberately of forming a literary society or of founding a literary élite.

The discussions were both informal and outspoken. It was obvious that those present enjoyed them. True, they still thought in terms of a new paper - to be called Der Skorpion - but the name Gruppe 47 had by now come into being, and began to have some significance.

The idea caught on. Der Skorpion never appeared, but the Gruppe grew both in membership and in influence. It was no organised "Society" - deliberately they kept it a loose, informal group. There was no president, no treasurer. Meetings were arranged by personal contact, with a telephone call confirming. Hans Werner Richter may have been the moving spirit, but he was not the uncrowned king.

Those who attended were those who themselves were interested in writing in one form or another. - Alfred Andersch, Walter Kolbenhoff, Wolfgang Bächler, Günter Eich, Wolfdietrich Schnurre, Nicolaus Sombart, Ernst Schnabel, Walter Maria Guggenheimer, most of whom had been connected with Der Ruf. These were followed shortly by Heinrich Böll, Wolfgang Hildesheimer, Ilse Aichinger, Walter Jens, Rolf Schreiers, Wolfgang Weyrauch. Soon the number at a meeting was over fifty.

From our point of view, it is perhaps significant that the first reading

was a short story by Wolfdietrich Schnurre entitled at first "Das Begräbnis des lieben Gottes", then later more simply "Das Begräbnis". But the fact that all aspects of writing were discussed and compared, not by professional critics, but by those who were most closely concerned - the writers themselves - meant that all debate had a positive and constructive aim, the promotion of effective writing. The question at issue was not "What do you write?" but rather "How do you write?", so that the technical approach to the subject came more and more under scrutiny.

The fact that no special emphasis was laid on any particular form of writing does not matter. More important is that no particular form of writing was debarred, and the short story as such, although it was given no preference, was discussed and analysed in exactly the same way as an excerpt from a play or a novel might have been. Its obvious suitability for discussion, because it could be read in its entirety, must have caused a number of members at least to experiment with it as a form, especially after hearing such accomplished writers as Schnurre and Böll, who had early shown their facility in the short story, which must have been beneficial to the spread of awareness of short story possibilities, if nothing more.

The term Kahlschlagliteratur did not appear in general use until 1949, and it first was seen or heard in the epilogue written by Wolfgang Weyrauch to his collection of short stories called Tausend Gramm.⁽¹⁾

Discussing the state of literature in Germany at the time, he says:

(1) Wolfgang Weyrauch: Tausend Gramm; Hamburg, 1949.

'Was aber gibt sie? Sie gibt einen Kahlschlag in unserem Dickicht. In der gegenwärtigen deutschen Prosa sind mehrere Schriftsteller erschienen, die versuchen, unsre blinden Augen sehend, unsre tauben Ohren hörend und unsre schreienden Mänder artikuliert zu machen.....'

The analogy of the cutting bare of a clearing in a forest, so that into the clear space light and air might penetrate to encourage new growth, was one which caught on immediately, especially among the members of the Gruppe 47, who were all themselves politically engaged writers. Their aim was to make a clean sweep of any last remnants of Fascist authority - or indeed any authority which threatened to curb or control their freedom of thought or action. The symbol of the German forest is one which is dear to any German heart, so the symbolism of the Kahlschlag made an immediate appeal.

Heinrich Böll was one of those writers to whom Weyrauch made reference in his epilogue. He has become a leading figure in modern German literary circles and beyond. In 1939 he was 22 years old, he had already completed his compulsory military service and he was then recalled to serve throughout the war.

Böll was never an enthusiastic National Socialist, nor was he a noticeably enthusiastic soldier. Catholics as a general rule had been slower to embrace the new political faith of the 1930's than their compatriots - certainly it was the steps of the Catholic churches which bore the slogan : Wer NEIN sagt, ist ein Volksverräter, at the time of the Hitler Ja oder Nein election of 1938 - and in all of Böll's work there is the continuing thread of religious faith.

Borchert's cry was one of youth condemned; a cry of outrage, from an extremity of experience. His writing was positive, his own position made clear in every sentence that he wrote. His writing was emotional, and at

times intemperate, but it stemmed from the intensity of his own personal feelings, of his own personal involvement, and he had in the end no time to revise and polish what he had written.

Böll too is intensely involved in his writing, but he is never carried away by emotion or temperament to the extent that Borchert is. His writing is never so feverish; possibly because of this it never reaches the same heights of poetic expression attained by Borchert. Böll has always written of reality, but as a returning soldier he wrote less of what he had seen during the war than of what he found when he came back. The past for Böll was gone. Its effect was there all around him, and it had made him what he now was, but the past itself could not be changed. In overcoming the inheritance of the immediate past Germans could lay the foundations of a better future, so Böll turned to the ruins of his country as the setting of his early stories, because his personal experience was also the experience of thousands of others.

His central character at that time was usually presented as a victim, buffeted hither and yon by circumstances, yet able to maintain a certain human kindness, a certain dignity, sometimes pathetic, and a certain faith in mankind still.

In his "Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur"⁽¹⁾ Böll himself said:

"Wir schrieben also vom Krieg, von der Heimkehr und dem, was wir im Krieg gesehen hatten und bei der Heimkehr vorfanden : von Trümmern; das ergab drei Schlagwörter, die der jungen Literatur angehängt wurden : Kriegs- Heimkehrer- und Trümmerliteratur".

One of his earliest stories, "Der Mann mit den Messern", which first

(1) Erzählungen, Hörspiele, Aufsätze, Köln, 1961, p.339.

appeared in 1947, tells something of the problems facing such returned soldiers.

Told with the flat lack of emphasis which is typical of the Kahlschlag period, and of Böll himself at that time, the characters are presented as one of them, the man with the knives, is practising for his act. Throwing a bread-knife high into the air, he catches it at the last moment in a board on his head. As he then throws his knives with unerring skill at the outline of a man drawn on a door, we learn from the conversation that the knife-thrower has been a sergeant, while the other was his lieutenant. Both had been prisoners. Both were now eking out a meagre existence, the lieutenant by breaking stones, the other with his knives.

For all the thrower's expertise however, it is apparent that the act is thin, and as they go to the theatre, the solution is already both obvious and inevitable. The former lieutenant becomes the target for his sergeant's knives, paradoxically finding a certain sense of security in taking up his new profession, hazardous though it might be.

The story reflects the experience of many of those returning soldiers who had not only to forget their previous existence, rank and whatever degree of authority and independence of action they may have known, but now had to find unusual and unaccustomed ways of earning their daily bread.

As with Borchert, there is a complete lack of sentiment and of self-pity. The lieutenant does not complain of his altered circumstances - his work as Gelegenheitsarbeiter has so far brought him enough to keep alive: 'Meine Schulter ist ein wenig gelähmt, und über einen bestimmten Radius hinaus kann ich die Arme nicht bewegen, es genügt gerade zum Steineklopfen'.

One looks to the future, to new hope.

Böhl uses adjectives which suggest the tattered, battered buildings and the miserable accommodation in them : alt, düster, wackelig, schmal, sparsam, kümmerlich; he brings out the contrast between what was (i.e. the town) and what is now (the garish lights of the "Sieben Mühlen" night spot), between the avid, greedy, restlessness of the audience and the weary indifference of the two ex-soldiers, so that the analogy of the Roman amphitheatre is inevitable but apt.

The same theme of the returning soldier is found in "So ein Rummel!", where, on his return to civilian life, the soldier turns up at a circus or fairground and is interviewed by the central character, the 'Frau ohne Unterleib'. As they speak, her three children are playing and squabbling round her caravan. The whole story lies in the dialogue between the two main characters, interrupted from time to time by the children, and also by the somewhat surly Carlino, who brings in some coffee and is heard in the background.

Most of the effect is again achieved by contrast : the contrast of the physical abnormality of the 'Frau ohne Unterleib' with the normality of her household tasks; the contrast of children playing in the sunlight, with the games which they play - such games as 'total destruction', 'refugees', with bombs, burning, bunkers, and the child who has 'to freeze to death'. This was the background known to every German of the time. It appears the more horrible because these are now 'games' played in the sunlight by children.

Yet even in this unnatural world, already a world of make-believe, a

circus world, there emerges reality, simplicity and affection on the part of the central character and an impression of the indestructibility of human quality.

This is what makes the thoughtful reader think, and this is what gives this story a lasting quality, whose effect is strengthened by the anonymity of the characters - as in Borchert. At a time when all men suffer in the same way, names of individuals are meaningless. Hemingway is the pattern for this technique. He uses the indeterminate 'you', which does not lend itself to German, but a story told either in the first or third person, without using names, gives a general impression of a situation common to the majority.

In his stories of actual warfare, as distinct from those about the return from war, Böll is primarily concerned with the effect of war on those taking part in it, but he differs from Borchert as a rule in the way in which he presents the subject. Both men were familiar enough with death in many of its forms, but while Borchert tends to dwell upon it and seeks to appal his reader by the shooting, the killing, the burning, and the burying, just as he himself had been appalled by them, Böll deals more with the living than with the dead.

True, death occurs. In his "In der Finsternis"⁽¹⁾ a man is killed, but he is a German, killed by another German in the darkness of No-man's Land, not by accident, but deliberately, for having sunk so low as to break the teeth of the dead for the handful of gold fillings he could win therefrom. The loathesomeness of this crime is used by Böll to show to what depths war can bring man.

The whole story is designed to repel : the opening scene with the two

(1) Heinrich Böll; Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa..., Köln, 1950, pp.112-121.

men presented as anonymous voices in the darkness of a trench, goes on to give us the feel of the discomfort, the mud, the cold, the water trickling down, the restless seeking after sleep; then the realisation that the sentry is not where he should be; the unidentifiable sounds from the darkness; the search among yesterday's dead; the discovery of the sentry at his grisly task; the shot; next man for sentry duty.

Brutal and harsh in its presentation, this particular story seems untypical of Böll. His characters remain anonymous : der Ältere, der Jüngere, or even, when the candle is out and they are in total darkness, die Ältere Stimme, and die jüngere Stimme, voice identification being used when an onlooker could not see who was speaking. They are viewed objectively, as if by some neutral observer, and we have no sense of identification with them, while Böll seems more at ease, more natural, when he gives a subjective view, as in his "Auch Kinder sind Zivilisten", which we shall examine shortly.

Here, in "In der Finsternis" is little of the human compassion shown by the majority of Böll's characters, even under stress. The theme of man's inhumanity to man is emphasised with sledge-hammer directness.

Even the central characters are introduced in such a way that the reader, far from being attracted, may be repelled. The first mention is of their smell: 'sie kannten ihren Geruch, fast den Geruch jeder Pore...' (p.112) Then they are described thus:

'Der Jüngere war blass und schmal und hatte ein Niemandsgesicht, und der Ältere war blass und schmal und unrasiert und hatte ein Niemandsgesicht.' (p.112)

Their language is jarringly coarse:

"Lass dieses Scheissjawohl...."; "Zieh dieses verdammte Scheisskoppel aus..."
(p.113)

"Verflucht, was hast du da zu suchen und uns verrückt zu machen, du altes Arschloch...." (p.118)

And even the tale of Willi, who was wounded because he was caught with his trousers down - a classic comic situation in every army and presumably in every war - serves only to lead, by a break in the unity of place, on into the final revolting description of the desecration of the dead.

The very title "In der Finsternis" is aptly symbolic, for not only is the action set in the darkness of night, but it represents also the darkness, the abysmal darkness to which civilised man can sink.

That Böll felt the degradations of war, that he suffered mentally as well as physically by these degradations, is apparent in each of his stories. Men at war could, in his view, become unworthy of mankind. Sometimes his bitterness is directed at those who were responsible, e.g. in the title-story of "Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa...." (pp.37-47)

Here, in the juxta-positioning of objects, the bust of Caesar and of Cicero, the pictures of the electoral princes, then of Hitler, the stretchers, the wounded, the operating-table : all inside a typically humanistic school-building, he achieves a much more effective and biting contrast of the two worlds, than he could have done by paragraphs of descriptive writing.

More frequently, he presents his central characters as the victims of circumstance - as he does in "Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa..", but he sometimes views their suffering as a part of the price they perhaps have to pay for their part-responsibility - Andreas in "Der Zug war pünktlich" says : "Es ist gut, dass ich leide...". (p.106)

In his more subjective stories we find those attributes of humanity and

sincerity which are perhaps more typical of Böll himself.

The little story entitled "Auch Kinder sind Zivilisten"⁽¹⁾ is certainly short - about 900 words - and it deals with one trivial episode during the war : a wounded soldier buying cakes. It is the kind of story defined by Walter Höllerer⁽²⁾ as eine Augenblickskurzgeschichte, yet it is satisfyingly full of implication and food for thought. Set in some Russian town in winter, the central character, an ordinary soldier, is not a heroic figure, although he has been wounded, and indeed although he shows a certain pride in that fact : "Ich", sagte ich stolz, "ich bin doch verwundet". The figure of the guard, representing authority, regulations, the Party, is unimpressed; he has seen it all before : "Du bist wohl's erstemal verwundet..." (p.59)

There is contempt on the part of the guard for the stupid soldier, there is resentment and dislike on the part of the soldier both for the guard : "Du bist ein Rindvieh.." and also for what he represents : "Der Führer segne deine Dienstauffassung" - here we have the attitude of every front-line soldier, cynical of reward, towards those who direct from the rear.

He snipes at the futility of regulations; first of all :

"Warum ist's verboten?" "Weil's verboten ist..."

and then again when (a) he is not allowed to go outside into the street even for the harmless purpose of buying cakes, and (b) when the girl is not allowed to come in, because she is a civilian :

(1) Heinrich Böll : Wanderer kommst du nach Spa...; Köln, 1930, pp.59-64.

(2) Walter Höllerer : "Die kurze Form der Prosa", Akzente 9, 1962, pp.233ff.

- "Mensch", sagte ich, "das Kind ist doch ein Kind."
 Er blickte mich wieder verächtlich an.
 - "Kinder sind wohl keine Zivilisten, was?" (p.59)

The pointlessness of these regulations is emphasised when the soldier goes further along the wall down beside the lavatory where, out of sight of the sentry, he can speak to the girl and buy the cakes.

W.J. Schwarz⁽¹⁾ makes the point : "Das Lächeln ist das äusserliche Kennzeichen aller Gestalten Bölls, die der Liebe fähig sind." In this story there are two references to the smiling girl, and it is true that the same kind of reference can be found in, for example, "Abschied", "Die Botschaft", or "Steh auf, steh doch auf".

Böll usually keeps his women at a distance - on a pedestal? - and he uses the smile or laughter as being symbolic perhaps of warm-heartedness and attractiveness.

The setting of this story is important to its effect : Russia for most Germans during the war was the end of the world; the darkness adds to the isolation; the snow adds to the silence: and the last sentence has the force of a cri de coeur : ".....Irgendwohin muss man gehen, auch wenn man verwundet ist in einem fremden, schwarzen, sehr dunklen Land....." (p.60) which shows the awful loneliness and smallness of man in war.

Another writer to appear, or rather to make a re-appearance about this time was Elisabeth Langgässer, the first of the women writers to re-establish herself after the war. During the 1930's, because of her Jewish connections, she had been prevented from active writing, but now she was among the first to be published. Although obviously her experiences in the immediate past

(1) W.J. Schwarz: Der Erzähler Heinrich Böll; Bern, 1967, p.56.

had not been the same as those of Borchert or Böll, no member of her race could remain unscathed. Much of the quality of her writing lies in the fact that depth of feeling is implied, not stated.

In 1947 there appeared her collection of short stories, under the title of Der Torso⁽¹⁾. These stories vary in content and in style, but one of the best-known is undoubtedly that entitled "Saisonbeginn".

This story opens with a description of an attractive Alpine village in late Spring as it awaits the arrival of the first of the summer visitors. Three workmen are setting about the task of erecting a new notice-board by the roadside at the entrance to the village. At the most suitable site for the notice there is a little wayside shrine. The men discuss just where their notice could be placed to the best effect.

Then they discover that if they go any further along the road, they will have to set their notice in the concrete of a filling-station, or by going further still, they will be too far from the village. One then suggests putting it across the road from the shrine. This seems ideal, but on returning to the spot, they find that the wide-spreading branches of a huge beech-tree will screen the notice from view. So it finally has to go alongside the Cross and they set to work with a will, aided by schoolchildren and viewed mostly with indifference by those adults who come by.

When they finish, their notice is so placed that it seems even the dying Christ is squinting upwards to try to see the words on it. The workmen pick up their tools, move off, then pause to look back in satisfaction at their notice with its inscription : JEWS ARE NOT WANTED HERE.

(1) Elisabeth Langgässer : Der Torso, Claasen Verlag, Hamburg, 1947.

The effect of this story, told in about 900 words, is the more powerful because of the 'ordinary' setting - it could be any village - the 'ordinary' workmen and their 'ordinary' task. Elisabeth Langgässer, herself a Jewess, remains admirably dispassionate and impersonal. As with Borchert, there is no hint of personal suffering or of personal tragedy, and as with Borchert, contrast is effectively used - the smiling, sunlit village, the dark shades of impending evil; and the final irony in the figure of Christ dying in His message to mankind, and alongside the notice-board with its message of shame. These stories by Borchert, Böll and Elisabeth Langgässer all stem from the same period, and all make a sharp impact on the reader : they did so when first written and they do so now. Probably they will continue to do so, because all three writers present central characters who are nameless, ordinary people, with whom the vast majority of readers (especially German readers) can readily identify themselves. In the case of Heinrich Böll, the ex-serviceman is a constantly recurring figure.

Furthermore, all three writers concentrate on a factual, unemotional style of telling, which is the more effective because these ordinary 'little' characters act out a theme in the story which is out of all proportion to them, some great human truth or philosophical concept, some theme of major significance in the hands of insignificant men.

From the purely technical point of view, 'Saisonbeginn' was spoiled - if only very slightly overall - by two things : Firstly, the opening description of the village scene is perhaps a little too wordy, a little too lyrical. Secondly, in the penultimate paragraph, when the whole sequence is mounting to its climax, there occurs the following sentence :

'Auch der sterbende Christus, dessen blasses, blutüber-
 ronneses Haupt im Tod nach der rechten Seite geneigt war,
 schien sich mit letzter Kraft zu bemühen, die Inschrift
 aufzunehmen : man merkte, sie ging ihn gleichfalls an,
 welcher bisher von den Leuten als einer der ihren betrachtet
 und wohl gelitten war.'

The part of this sentence following the colon is not only quite unnecessary to the action of the story, but in its highly-correct literary grammatical expression it is out of harmony with the story, which is deliberately set at an 'ordinary' level.

It is unlikely that either Borchert or Böll would have made a mistake of this kind. Hans Bender quotes Borchert as saying :

'Wir brauchen keinen Dichter mit guter Grammatik. Zu guter Grammatik fehlt uns die Geduld. Wir brauchen den mit dem heissen, heiser geschluchzten Gefühl. Die zu Baum Baum und zu Weib Weib sagen und ja sagen und nein sagen : Laut und deutlich und ohne Konjunktiv.....'(1)

But Elisabeth Langgässer was brought up a generation earlier : the new, simpler form of expression does not perhaps come so readily to her.

Obviously not all the stories written at this time had the quality of the three quoted. Much was written which related to personal experience, memories, justifications, accusations. These were sincere enough, and doubtless heartfelt, expressing an emotion of the time. But like harsh memories, most of them have faded.

One very typical collection from this early period was called Kind unsrer Zeit.⁽²⁾ Published in 1947, all the stories in the collection deal with the immediate postwar period and give a very clear picture of that time.

(1) Hans Bender: "Zur Definition der Kurzgeschichte", Akzente: 9 Jahrgang, 1962, pp.216,217.

(2) Franz Joseph Schneider: Kind unsrer Zeit, Dietmannsried/Allgäu, 1947.

The characters are often returning prisoners of war, either escaping from or being released from captivity, to return to those other problems of homecoming, without transport, without trains, without food, over bad roads to a town in ruins, sustained by the hope that their families are alive and still there to welcome them.

As a record of the time, these stories by Schneider, typified by the title story, "Kind unsrer Zeit" and another "Der Krieg ist aus", are valuable, for although they may lack the underlying strength of theme to be found in Borchert and Böll, they are well told and have the essential quality of truth.

A little later, in 1949, Bertolt Brecht brought out his Kalendergeschichten and also Der verwundete Sokrates, and about the same time there appeared one or two collections of diaries and essays, of which Rudolf Krämer-Badoni's personal narrative⁽¹⁾ In der grossen Drift, and the collected impressions of war by Felix Hartlaub,⁽²⁾ under the title Von unten gesehen - which were published by his brother in 1950 - are probably the best.

It was at this time too, that Wolfdietrich Schnurre brought out his first collection of stories under the title Die Rohrdommel ruft jeden Tag.⁽³⁾

Schnurre is the third of those authors we have selected for closer examination. Younger than Böll, older than Borchert, he was just nineteen at the outbreak of war and was therefore involved in it from the start.

(1) Rudolf Krämer-Badoni : In der grossen Drift, Darmstadt, 1949.

(2) Felix Hartlaub : Von unten gesehen, Stuttgart, 1950.

(3) Wolfdietrich Schnurre : Die Rohrdommel ruft jeden Tag, Witten und Berlin, 1950.

Like Borchert, he was imprisoned several times during his war service and emerged at the end embittered certainly, scarred mentally, but determined that there should be in Germany a free press and a free literature. He associated with Hans Werner Richter, and became a founder-member of the Gruppe 47.

Although Die Rohrdommel ruft jeden Tag did not appear in book form until 1950, most of the stories had already appeared separately, written between 1945 and 1947.

The first of the collection, "Das Brot", (which has also appeared as "Auf der Flucht"), is a story in many ways reminiscent of Hemingway, whose style Schnurre has obviously studied. It begins thus : 'Der Mann hatte einen Bart und war schon etwas älter; zu alt fast für die Frau.' (p5)

Thus the characters are immediately anonymous, with only a vague description given, but their relationship is clearly and accurately placed.

The little group has nothing to eat. The whole countryside is a desert in which, owing to the hot summer and the ravages of war, nothing is growing. There are no villages, no houses. Faint with hunger, the family stops to rest. The man goes foraging, and after a long time stumbles on a ruined farmhouse, where he finds one stale crust of bread. He dare not break the bread, knowing that he would then eat it all, so he starts back towards the others. Caught by a thunderstorm, in pouring rain, he makes every effort to preserve the bread, sheltering it with his body, until finally:

....'jetzt nahm es ab; Stück um Stück, und zerrann. Da begriff er : Frau hin, Frau her; er hatte die Wahl jetzt : entweder es sich auflösen zu lassen, oder es selber zu essen.....' (p.9)

He eats, then filled with shame, he at last finds the others. Telling

his wife he has found nothing, he goes to sleep. While he is asleep, the child dies.

- "Was ist?" fragte der Mann.
- Die Frau rührte sich nicht, sie sah in die Wipfel.
- "Es ist tot," sagte sie dann.
- Der Mann fuhr auf. "Tot?" sagte er; "tot - ?!"
- "Es ist gestorben, während du schliefst", sagte die Frau.
- "Warum hast du mich nicht geweckt?"
- "Warum sollte ich dich wecken?" fragte die Frau. (p 11)

The bare simplicity of this final dialogue is starkly effective, and again very reminiscent of Hemingway. So too is Schnurre's use of short, abrupt sentences, e.g. at the beginning of the thunderstorm. 'Wind kam. Tropfen fielen. Sie knallten wie Erbsen auf den dörrenden Boden.' (p 7)

His economy in the use of adjectives is severe in the extreme. In the whole story only the following occur :

- 'Die Kiefern waren mit langsam wandernden Raupen bedeckt.'
- 'Er ging durch den sterbenden Wald.'
- 'Er lief über einen schwarz staubenden Platz.'
- 'Tropfen fielen. Sie knallten wie Erbsen auf den dörrenden Boden.'
- 'Seine Finger krallten sich.....in den nassen Sand.'
- 'Helles Blau; die Nässe verdampfte.' (pp 6 - 10)

Yet in spite of the paucity of attributive adjectives - and it is noticeable that four of the six used are in fact participles - his language is evocative, certainly not lacking in imagery :

....'der Regen nahm zu. Der Wald vorn und das Dorf hinten waren wie weggewischt. Dunstfahnen flappten über die Heide. In den Sand gruben sich Bäche.' (p 8)

Or again:

'Im Farn und im Blaubeerkraut gleissten die Tropfen. Die Luft war dick vor Schwüle und Dampf.' (p 10)

And Schnurre is one of the few German writers at the present time whose observation of the countryside seems filled with awareness of the birds and the animals there, and of their habits:

'Das bisschen Wind wehte nur oben. Es war für den Bussard gut; Reh und Hase lagen hechelnd im Farn.' (p 5)

And again:

'Am Waldrand lehnte er sich an eine Kiefer. Von weither war der Regenruf des Buchfinken zu hören; auch ein Kuckuck schrie kurz.' (p 10)

This awareness of animal life occurs again in the title-story of the collection, "Die Rohrdommel ruft jeden Tag", where the enduring values of the country and country life find expression in the booming cry of the bittern amongst the marsh-land reeds. Again factually told, it shows the reaction of a country district to the final collapse as war draws nearer and nearer. The frantic issuing of arms to the villagers, the attitude of the farmer, whose whole life and nature have been shaped by his surroundings and the discipline of the seasons, are set in contrast here. Wars are man-made, and even the enemy general shows himself to be as weary of war as the farmer.

Here the likeness to Hemingway lies not only in the laconic dialogue, which Schnurre has developed to a high degree, but also in the use of description -

'Eine Brise kam auf und wehte Lärm und Kuhgebrüll aus dem Dorf herüber. Die Seefläche kräuselte sich. Nur im Windschatten hinter dem Boot blieb das Wasser noch glatt. Das Boot trieb langsam zum Schilf hin.' (p. 132)

Compare that with :

'The hills across the valley of the Ebro were long and white. On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun. Close against the sides of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Ernest Hemingway : "Hills like White Elephants" in The Fifth Column and the First 49 Stories, London, 1939, p.37ff.

Schnurre times his sentence or two of description just as Hemingway does, while in his strength of characterisation and handling of theme, he shows a maturity exceptional in a first book.

He presents his characters as the haunted, hounded creatures of their time, victims of the catastrophe. Writing from the depth of his own experience, like Böll he still has faith in mankind. In "Die Tat", a former German soldier says :

'Was heisst denn hier Schuld. Schuldig sind wir alle.....
Was wir aus unserem Schuldgefühl machen, wie wir uns ein-
richten mit ihm - darauf kommt's an.' (p. 105)

This sentence is a key to Schnurre's own philosophy. Technically, he is both conscientious and disciplined in his artistic presentation. The laconic, abrupt dialogue of "Die Rohrdommel ruft jeden Tag" tells so much more than another thousand words of writing would have done. His visual imagery is acute and he brings to it an occasional flash of parabolic expression - cf "Das Manöver", where the car of the army General is held up by a huge flock of sheep surrounding it; and again in "Der Ausmarsch", where schoolboys - near babes in arms - called up to military service in the later days of the war, parade on the barrack square, anxiously and silently watched by their mothers at the gate.

In the foreword of a more recent work⁽¹⁾, Schnurre says of this early period :

'Man fing damals nicht an zu schreiben, weil man sich vorgenommen hatte, Schriftsteller zu werden. Man schrieb, weil man nicht anders konnte. Man schrieb aus Erschütterung, aus Empörung. Man schrieb, weil einem die furchtbaren Kriegserfahrungen eine Lehre aufzwangen. Man schrieb, um zu warnen.....'

(1) Wolfdietrich Schnurre : Man sollte dagegen sein; München, 1960. p. 9

And again, on the purpose of writing at that time :

.....'diese Nachkriegsliteratur hatte nicht nur wahrhaftig und misstrauisch zu sein gelernt, sie verstand auch zu beunruhigen; sie provozierte. Sie griff an. Und sie wusste nicht nur w e n sie anzugreifen hatte, sie wusste auch f ü r wen sie es tat. Denn es war eine engagierte Literatur; eine Literatur, die etwas wollte.....' (p.10)

These statements by Schnurre summarise succinctly the findings of this chapter of our research. We have selected Borchert, Böll, Elisabeth Langgässer und Schnurre himself as being significant representatives of the period. Schnurre says first that they wrote 'aus Erschütterung, aus Empörung', and although the short story of the immediate postwar period concerned itself mainly with past experience, this was because the writer had to 'write out' the cataclysmic psychological upheaval he had undergone in the previous decade - and this 'writing out' is both understandable and indeed often quite essential to a writer, before he could settle to writing of the present and the future.

It has been said in criticism that much in this period was published which as literature has no value. This is of course true - of what period is it not true? - but amongst the mass of material which appeared, the work of such authors as we have selected stands out in its meaningful quality.

Borchert was bound to succeed : his whole tragic existence was a symbol for the Germans, and the quality and feverish sincerity of his work made the impact immediate. He did not need to think consciously of the effect he was to have, as he was writing purely for posterity.

Elisabeth Langgässer's effect is as a representative of her race. She neither provokes nor attacks, but she sets down, as we saw in 'Saisonbeginn', uncomplainingly and gently, much about the German character that is as distur-

bing in its ability to make the reader think as is for example William Golding's Lord of the Flies.

Heinrich Böll and Schnurre himself are different again. They represent the survivors, those who themselves suffered under misrule and who now have the strength of will to want to play some part in the necessary readjustment of their society. Both are, and always have been, wholly 'engagiert' in their writing. Both consciously wrote for effect then, as they have done since. The fact that their stories from that early period not only brought them success then, but have survived as literature since, is testimony to their quality.

The relevance of the short story as such to the writing of the time was twofold. In the first place, it may have been easier for a writer to have shorter material published in the limited markets available to immediate post-war editors. To write a novel, unless under very well-organised and firmly-established conditions, takes months, even years. Nothing in the Germany of 1946-50 was firmly established. Secondly, the short story form lent itself readily to the kind of writing which authors were at that time undertaking. As we made clear in the introduction to this research, an author starts with his theme, then when he has that quite clearly in his mind, he considers how best to present that theme. This determines the form of his narrative, and the short story form was ideally suited to the episodic themes of wartime experience and to the transitional pattern of the present.

Similarity of theme often led to similarity of style and structure which is one reason for the criticism of flat mediocrity levelled, not only in Germany, at the writing of the time. But writers of perception, like Böll and

Schnurre, were able to emerge, as we have seen, and to stand out, because they had studied their approach and style. Böll wrote with humanity and feeling of characters with whom his readers could identify themselves, while Schnurre made Hemingway his model to develop strength of dialogue and a powerful climax.

CHAPTER FOUR : THE 1950's.A) GENERAL :

The huge progress of the early 1950's towards a future which in 1945 no German could have foreseen has come to be universally known as the Wirtschaftswunder in Germany.

Some kind of order followed upon chaos; stability succeeded insecurity; sudden prosperity took the place of black poverty. The older generations may have viewed it all with a certain mistrust and even cynicism, but all around them Germany was rebuilding. There was new life, new vigour.

It is not surprising, amidst all this revival, that there should also be a new vigour in literature and writing. The new writers of the postwar period now had both confidence and authority. More of the new generation were being published for the first time and pre-war writers were trying to re-establish themselves.

Expatriate Germans like Thomas Mann[?] and Carl Zuckmayer[?] had returned to their native land and were writing again, with some success. Men like Gottfried Benn and Ernst Jünger had a number of their earlier works re-issued, but magic once gone is difficult to recapture, and neither of these was able to exert any new influence on the short story, while the sedate style of the older generation, typified perhaps by Werner Bergengruen - born like Elisabeth Langgässer in the 1890's - stood in contrast to the urgency of the younger group. Bergengruen is so completely unhurried in his style and diction that his stories seem full of telling rather than of action, which might be taken to indicate one main difference between the Novelle and the short story proper.

Nein: i.d.
Schweiz!

The Gruppe 47, which had certainly fired the imagination and the enthusiasm of writers - in all fields of writing - from 1947 on, continued in the early 1950's to exert considerable influence, but inevitably began also to be the target for some criticism.

Some of these criticisms are set forth in an article by Herman Kesten⁽¹⁾ which he calls "Kritische Rückblicke".

Obviously, where a group or society sets itself up, or is accepted by others as being in any way responsible for the advancement of literature, or indeed anything else, it is bound to meet with some criticism, and any organisation as loose and informal as the Gruppe 47 strove to be, laid itself especially open.

In the first place, membership of the group was by invitation only, and while this may have been both simple and convenient when meetings were confined mainly to former members of the staff of Der Ruf, whose aim was primarily to found another newspaper, as that newspaper project faded out and the 'literary' activity of the group increased in importance, the question of membership was bound to become one of some interest to those who were outside the original group. What was the basis of membership to be? It has been pointed out that some of the founder-members may not have published anything at all, much less anything of note, and while this may be and probably is completely true, it is valid as a criticism only if the Gruppe 47 has in fact claimed to be for established authors only, and this it has not done.

It appears that it was left largely to Hans Werner Richter to invite in the early days, those writers who could speak or comment with some authority,

(1) Reinhard Lettau : Die Gruppe 47 : Bericht, Kritik, Polemik, Neuwied und Berlin, 1967, pp.320-328.

and who were in their own outlook anti-fascist or anti-establishment - and emphasis was laid on this political viewpoint. In a comment - in his foreword to his Almanach der Gruppe 47⁽¹⁾ - Richter himself has said :

'Der Ursprung der Gruppe 47 ist politisch-publizistischer Natur. Nicht Literaten schufen sie, sondern politisch engagierte Publizisten mit literarischen Ambitionen.'

The word 'engagiert' is here a key word.

In the year 1947 it was probably more difficult to find somebody who had not suffered in some way at the hands of the recent régime, but obviously as time went on and life moved into the 1950's and grew away from the attitudes of the 1940's, this condition of political commitment became increasingly difficult to maintain.

Life in the 1950's was looking forward, not back, and for some there may have seemed a certain complacency in the attitude of the established members of the Gruppe 47 in regard to the matter of new membership.

To say the group was now 'eine Grass-Richtersche Privatliteraturplantage' may have been going too far, but there seems little doubt that the 'restricted' membership of the group was one main cause of criticism levelled at it.

It would however be wrong to assume that the Gruppe 47 remained comfortably static in its own outlook. As life in Germany changed for the better in the ten years from 1945, obviously writers as well as others - possibly more especially writers - developed in their outlook too.

Most of them, in the early days, had written of past experience - Schnurre's 'writing-out' process - but then they were able to develop new

(1) H.W. Richter (ed) : Almanach der Gruppe 47; Hamburg, 1962, p.8.

themes for themselves, and for each individual these themes would be different. So now during the 1950's writers from the Gruppe 47 were developing their individual talents and skills along lines of their own, writing with confidence and added technique on a wide variety of subjects. Nor were they in any way 'representative' of the Gruppe, for by the late 1950's most of them had become completely established in their own right.

Clearly this could weaken the authority of the Gruppe, but the Gruppe as such never had 'authority' over the writing of its members. It served to encourage at a time when encouragement was needed. If its position now is a more honorary one, it has still served a very useful purpose.

As we now set out to examine the 1950's, our starting-point could well be in the carry-over from the 1940's effected by members of the Gruppe 47, and as Elisabeth Langgässer was the first woman to come to the forefront of postwar writing, so Ilse Aichinger was among the first to emerge in the 1950's. Her first novel, Die grössere Hoffnung, had appeared in 1948, but now she brought out in Austria a collection of stories under the title : Rede unter dem Galgen⁽¹⁾. (One of these stories was called "Der Gefesselte" and the whole collection appeared under 1953).

The story "Der Gefesselte" itself aroused considerable comment. It is strongly reminiscent of Kafka, both in theme and in technique. Disturbing in its imagery, it is somewhat intangible, grotesque, yet we watch with fascination the central figure, completely anonymous yet strangely

(1) Ilse Aichinger : Rede unter dem Galgen, Wien, 1952, then as Der Gefesselte, Frankfurt, 1953.

familiar, as he struggles against, then gradually comes to terms with Them, the nameless forces which enclose and control his whole existence; forces which set in place the fetters from which he can never escape, but within whose limitations he achieves the restricted freedom with which he learns to be satisfied.

The story is told in the third person throughout. It begins with the sentence: "Er erwachte in der Sonne", and continues to the last:

"In der Morgendämmerung schien es ihm, als trüge das Wasser
Eisschollen, als wäre drüben in den Auen schon Schnee gefallen,
der die Erinnerung nimmt." (p.24)

At no time do we come nearer to the central character than this anonymous, indeterminate 'he'. No names are given anywhere, which creates an atmosphere both vague and menacing. The only background is the circus, again without descriptive or geographical detail, but giving an impression of cages, animals, grotesque creatures and abnormality.

Another story is "Der Hauslehrer", which is also frightening, although set against an everyday background of reality. A child is alone in an empty house with his tutor. Again, neither character has a name. The child is content with a story and the presence of a grown-up in the house. He has faith. Adult imagination however begins to hear voices and sounds in the house, inaudible to the child, and adult fear develops.

Together they tiptoe through the house, the child thinking it is a game. He dresses up in his father's coat and so completes the destruction of the tutor, who is seized in the nick of time by the returning parents. The child, now quite terrified, no longer trusts adults. His faith has been destroyed.

Again it is the anonymity, the effect of the nameless third person

which is so devastating in this story. All the formless, nameless fears of childhood are given play, and the fact that they are experienced, not by the child, but by the adult makes an even greater impact.

It is on those claustrophobic stories of nightmare and fear that Ilse Aichinger is so often likened to Kafka, and the similarity in theme and in treatment is at times striking, although Kafka's sentence structure is generally heavier than Aichinger's.

Ilse Aichinger was born in 1921. She must have been familiar with fear throughout her most impressionable formative years. The nightmare quality of much of her work is terrifyingly real, because she herself had experienced the same nightmare.

Elisabeth Langgässer was of an earlier generation. She was therefore, during the years of horror for Jews in Germany and Austria, more mature, less emotional, better able to view events and later set them down with greater perspective and less personal involvement than was Ilse Aichinger, who was 18 at the outbreak of war. Elisabeth Langgässer writes stories as narrative accounts of events, Ilse Aichinger's are lived as an experience, and if that experience is described in terms of unnamed fears and hinted, nebulous terror, it is because this is a continuation of what experience itself must have been for her.

"Fiction" in writing is based to a very great extent on experience, either personal or at least known, and it is the authenticity of nightmare retold in her early works that earned Ilse Aichinger the numerous literary awards which came her way.

She was first woman writer of the Gruppe 47 to meet with success, and

her early success was on a par with that of Böll and Schnurre, so that it seemed her literary future was assured. Unfortunately however, she has not been able to maintain her literary output. Since her marriage in 1953, she has written one or two radio plays, but it was not until 1965 that she brought out another collection, this time not of stories, but of dialogues.

B) HEINRICH BÖLL IN THE 1950's.

Every author who is successful with his early work has then to decide once and for all whether he is going to commit himself henceforth to the same kind of writing, in which he has been successful, or whether he is going to branch out into other forms, other themes.

Heinrich Böll, after his initial success with short stories, turned his attention and his interest to the novel. Life in Germany seemed more stable, the country was rebuilding, trade was thriving, men were able to earn at a rate hitherto unknown, and were able to look ahead and make plans for a future they had not expected.

By 1954 Böll had written his first three novels, Wo warst du, Adam?, (1951) a novel against war with all its senseless waste, then two which drew attention to some of the social and moral problems which beset Germany at that time - Und sagte kein einziges Wort (1953) and Haus ohne Hüter. (1954) In a society in which tens of thousands of husbands and fathers were still officially 'missing' to their families, obviously there were very real problems on every hand.

Böll's characters, as we would expect of him by now, are ordinary people, for the most part well-meaning, well-intentioned people, who are the victims of circumstance. In the case of a young mother with a couple of small children for example, whose husband is 'missing presumed killed' or even simply 'missing' - where does her responsibility lie? Is it not to her children? But if she should re-marry, or contract an 'Onkel-ehe', and her real husband then came back? What would the position be then?

This was the kind of question Böll tried to discuss in his writing at the time, for this was a major problem, at a time when German's economy was booming and new hope springing up. It may have been that he felt the question

was too big to be dealt with in a short story. It may simply have been a desire for experiment with another form of writing, but although these three novels were all reasonably successful, as were his later ones also, they never quite achieve the quality of his short stories.

Böll himself, in an interview⁽¹⁾ was asked what was his favourite form in writing, and in which did he think he could best express himself. His answer was : 'Die Form, die ich wähle, ist abhängig vom Stoff' - a point we have already made on the approach to writing - but he goes on to say 'und diese Form, die Kurzgeschichte, ist mir die liebste.... ...sie bleibt für mich die reizvollste Prosaform, weil.....mich das Problem "Zeit" sehr beschäftigt und eine Kurzgeschichte alle Elemente der Zeit enthält : Ewigkeit, Augenblick, Jahrhundert.....'

Böll has never expressed the same liking for the novel as he has for the short story. He experimented with radio plays, wrote essays, and then in 1955 brought out So ward Abend und Morgen⁽²⁾, which is a collection of only five stories, but all of these have since been reprinted in magazines and short story collections, and so have become individually very well known.

Such a one for example is "Die Postkarte", the story of one man's call-up to the army in the fateful summer of 1939. This scene, familiar to countless Germans, is recalled without sentiment but with factual simplicity of style and language, set against a domestic background certain to evoke memories all over Germany (and indeed elsewhere).. There is the contrast between the highly-personal domesticity of the setting, the relationship of the

(1) Horst Bienek : Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern; DTV, 1965, p.170.

(2) Heinrich Böll : So ward Abend und Morgen; Zürich, 1955.

young man to his widowed mother, and the abruptly impersonal postcard, with its typically illegible signature over the official stamp, which tells him to report 'for training'. Even the feebly consoling remark made by the young man : 'Mein Gott, nur für acht Wochen', must have been made by countless young men, in the knowledge that they were convincing nobody.

Another story, "Das Abenteuer", is the story of a confessional, which underlines Böll's concern with Catholicism and the Catholic church. He has sometimes, in his presentation of a man in his loneliness, a man alienated from God and other men, been likened to Kafka, and if we think of Kafka's "Trilogy of Loneliness", to use the phrase coined by Max Brod, the allusion may not be misplaced.

But even in the concept of man facing a crisis in his life, the world of Böll is essentially an ordinary world. His ordinary characters may have to dance to the tune of authority, in a system they can do little if anything to alter, yet the world of Böll is not the grotesque, symbolic world of Kafka's fantasy, and his characters have in them that essential quality of goodness and indeed humility which Böll himself believes to be inherent in the ordinary man.

By the second half of the 1950's, prosperity and affluence had come to be accepted by the Germans. Ten years and more had gone by since the end of the war, the shadow of the atom bomb no longer seemed so menacing, new families were growing up with no memory of what had gone before. Outlooks were changing, and were reflected in the writing of the time.

In 1956 Böll produced his Unberechenbare Gäste, the title-story of which has become very well-known and has appeared separately and again in his over-

all collection of Erzählungen, Hörspiele, Aufsätze.⁽¹⁾

Like many other stories by Böll, this one is told in the first person. It presents a harrassed but likeable family man, facing up not only to the normal problems of providing for his wife and children in an unsympathetic world, but also to the complications arising from his wife's inability to turn away beggars and hawkers, from whom she buys huge quantities of unnecessary soap, buttons and razor-blades, which the long-suffering husband then has to sell or exchange for more edible commodities.

In addition, the whole family has an inordinate love of animals of all shapes and sizes, so that seagulls, foxes, pigs, on one occasion a little hippopotamus and on another a little dromedary are at some time or another all accepted as members of the family, until the day comes when a bankrupt circus-owner's elephant is crammed into the cellar, having been introduced there by means of the coal-chute, and a point of near-crisis arises.

"Walter", sagte meine Frau leise und legte die Gabel hin,
"es ist ja nur Wollo." Sie begann zu weinen, und gegen
ihre Tränen bin ich machtlos; denn sie hat mir sieben Kinder
geschenkt. (p.101)

In this way the crisis is averted ... momentarily, and in the manner typical of Böll, who introduces the reader to a family circle and then relates the story almost confidentially, as though to a close friend, in language of the everyday.

Here again, the effective technique is one of fantasy dressed in everyday clothes - the grotesqueness of the situation with the hippopotamus, the elephant, the lion and the other creatures being minimised into near normality by the use of ordinary language, and by the presentation of the central character as a 'little' man, quite unpretentious, and completely affectionate in his

(1) Heinrich Böll : Erzählungen, Hörspiele, Aufsätze; Köln, 1961, p.99.

regard for his wife and family.

Yet the essential question - what is normality? - expresses the problem contained in the whole story. In a rapidly-changing world, a world of shifting stress and variable values, who is to judge the norm?

"Es ist immerhin ungewöhnlich, das wirst du zugeben."
 "Was ist nicht ungewöhnlich?" sagte meine Frau, und darauf
 wusste ich keine Antwort. (p.103)

In this comment lies the crux of the whole story, and indicates Böll's purpose in writing it, however light his touch.

Several times in the late 1950's, Böll casts a critical eye at the social scene, to give humorous or satirical expression to the weaknesses or foibles of his fellow-men. In the collection Der Bahnhof von Zimpren, there is a delightful story entitled "Es wird etwas geschehen", which is worth considering in some detail.⁽¹⁾

Böll once again tells this story in the first person, his central character being both observer and commentator on the surroundings in which he is placed. The whole story reflects the impressions made upon this character, and is seen from his viewpoint, and as Böll's intention is that of social criticism, it is essential for him to establish with us, his readers, just how dependable that character is, in order that we may accept his views as valid.

Böll takes care to make this question of the central character clear to us right at the start. Not by any means a hustler, not even a worker at all, he appears as a sedate, contemplative kind of man, almost oriental in his detached philosophy. To exist and to observe, to absorb and to understand better is a sufficient reason for living :

'Von Natur bin ich mehr dem Nachdenken und dem Nichtstun
 zugeeignet als der Arbeit.' (p.22)

(1) Heinrich Böll: Der Bahnhof von Zimpren, Köln, 1959.

He is certainly a lazy man. But he is, nonetheless an accurate and perspicacious observer of minute detail, and he is sensitive enough to articulate his reactions to every situation. In short, a character from whom we may learn, whom we may trust, whose independence we may respect.

And what is the criticism made in the story? In the first place, the futility of the very existence of the Wunsiedel factory at all :

'Spät erst fiel mir ein, dass ich mich nie für den Artikel interessiert habe, der in Wunsiedels Fabrik hergestellt wurde. Es wird wohl Seife sein.' (p.29)

And that is after he has worked there.

Only the Huxley-type conditioning-slogan brainwashes the employees into working effectively. The desperate cry of : 'Es muss etwas geschehen!', which is then gratified by the palliative : 'Es wird etwas geschehen!'; the nine, then eleven, then thirteen telephones into which the slogans of success are barked daily; the aptitude test, with its absurd questions and even more absurd answers; and the superb "Schlafen ist Sünde!" - all are an indictment of industry with its facade of efficiency, and its sales and production propagandists.

But the Wunsiedel factory embodies many of the characteristics of modern, present-day living : good living conditions, good health, cleanliness, a pseudo-brightness that is self-wrought, a set of values which are essentially unnatural. The pretence of eagerness and enthusiasm on the part of the applicant for the post points to some affectation among the already-successful bustling employees there. The importance of being able to handle several telephones (and a ball-point pen, and a knitting-machine) all at the same time implies that a man must be a superman in order to qualify for Wunsiedel's factory.

And surely there is a criticism here not only of modern industrial life,

but indeed of all modern life. Like those in the factory, we live in surroundings of functional excellence and advanced design, an environment..... 'das Einrichtungsfanatikern das Wort "entzückend" auf die Lippen gezaubert hätte.'

Beyond this there is frequently a pointlessness in our existence, whether we realise it nor not. Our routine habits of daily life, as we 'energisch den Gürtel des Bademantels zuschnüren', the way we put on our hat, kiss the wife and so on - all have to be given a myth of importance before they assume any purpose.

Similarly, we all 'wait for Godot', to use Beckett's term. We have to believe that 'etwas wird geschehen', in order to make life bearable. Without this drug of dishonesty and self-deceit man will die - as Wunsiedel does.

And is there any alternative to this? There is indeed, and here Böll's satire is at its best, because he offers a positive to counter the negatives which he has criticised. We must be honest, with ourselves and with others; we must not try to disguise routine; we must accept life and contemplate it as an individual, not as some kind of puppet in a show; we must challenge a system which destroys individuality; and finally, we must find our own niche, so that we may live our own lives, doing whatever we were born to do.

The fact of man's finding himself is of the greatest importance. Only in this - even in the ridiculous position of professional mourner - can man find dignity, ease, and what is very important, become imbued with 'presence'. It is significant that none of the industrialists have any personality of their own - they are mere blusterers and bustlers, they could not walk serenely within the bounds of ceremony, they would have to rush.

Böll does not ask us to identify ourselves with his central character,

nor does he advocate inactivity or laziness. But he does advocate the finding of human dignity by the progression of individuality, and he achieves a great deal in this story simply by projecting reality one short step into fantasy. His observation is acute, but he himself has stated :

'Aber ich wiederhole, ein gutes Auge gehört zum Handwerkszeug des Schriftstellers, ein Auge, gut genug, ihn auch Dinge sehen zu lassen, die in seinem optischen Bereich noch nicht aufgetaucht sind.'⁽¹⁾

For Böll, reality itself is fantastic - 'Was ist nicht ungewöhnlich?' - and if its values are false, his satire is sufficiently light in touch to avoid being cruel, while pointed enough to illustrate a moral.

Often we find a career as the focal point of the story - a career relates the individual to society and to the accepted values of society, it also establishes a relationship with authority - of "Geschäft ist Geschäft" - and Böll gives his central character a degree of independence as he does here in "Es wird etwas geschehen" - so that he can retain a certain dignity, sometimes by changing his job, or sometimes by refusing a job - of "Mein teures Bein".

In the story we have just considered, Böll's language, as usual, is simple : simplicity is always a keyword in his work. Yet, though the language is apparently straightforward, he uses words which suggest more by implication than they actually mean, and this gives fullness to the narrative. For example, when the new applicant realises that the breakfast is part of the aptitude test : '...so kaute ich hingebungsvoll' - as any man would, who knew he was introducing '...wertvolle Stoffe' to his body; the fact that in the canteen they ate '...vitaminreiche Speise' - the only possible food for anyone in Wunsiedel's factory; and finally the wonderful expression.....

(1) Heinrich Böll : Erzählungen, Hörspiele, Aufsätze; Köln, 1961, p.341.

'Sie sind der geborene Trauernde'.

In the ten or twelve years from the immediate postwar period up to the end of the 1950's, Böll's literary output had been both varied and considerable. His position was established, and although obviously one work might have greater success than another, the quality which he brought to all his work is consistently impressive in technical skill.

A study of his work over the years is a study of social development and social problems in a changing, developing society. It has been said that much of his impact is dependent on historical events, but this is true of any writer who sets out to write of events taking place around him. It is in the way in which Böll can depict human beings in situations of crisis and against a background of contemporary problems, to bring out some great yet simple truth that his stature as a creative writer lies.

His method of presentation has not changed over the years. He still presents his central characters as people who evoke the sympathy, the understanding, and usually the liking of the reader.

In his early stories - those for example in Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa... (1950) - he emphasises the essential loneliness of his character by using such phrases as : 'Die Welt schien menschenleer zu sein...', '....die Welt schien tot...', 'ich war ganz allein auf der Welt', 'lag in völligem Dunkel ganz allein in der Erde...' and so on, and here he resembles Borchert.

This loneliness belongs to these early stories of war and the insignificance of one man amidst it all. The brief encounter, the moment of farewell, also belongs to this period - "Auch Kinder sind Zivilisten", "Die Botschaft", "Damals in Odessa", "Abschied" etc. (all 1949) but in his later stories, which may deal with single episodes, the whole atmosphere

has changed, because Böll now views society as such, and presents his character against that society, so that we are aware of him in his relationship to others, and of those others as part of a contemporary pattern. The power of his visual presentation is maintained, while his ability to develop his characters amidst the hardship and anxieties of universal and ever-valid situations is strengthened because of the variety of those situations.

C) SECONDARY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 1950's: PARABLE - FANTASY - HUMOUR

Any society which develops quickly under a very flourishing economy soon acquires so much material wealth that values hitherto accepted and respected now become old-fashioned and out of date.

In Germany in the early 1950's this situation was complicated by the fact that the nation as a whole was trying to erase the memory of the war and the pre-war years of National Socialism, and that the younger generation was showing distrust not only of the older generation and all that it stood for, but also dislike for any form of restriction. This was reflected in general by a mistrust of authority at all levels, by a demand for freedom not only of speech but also of the press - as we have already seen in regard to the method of founding the Gruppe 47 - and by open criticism of anything political which smacked of 'establishment'.

Against such a background, satire or caricature can always flourish, and it is perhaps significant that modern writers at this stage should have turned to the parable form of expression when they had some point of satire or some comment of social criticism to make, preferring this oblique approach to the possibly more direct reference of, for example, the short story.

In 1953, Heinz Risse⁽¹⁾ was probably the first to return to the parable, and in his collection, entitled Belohne dich selbst, he chose the world of insects for his pieces, which like the fables of Aesop, are short and satiric in content, with delightful drawings of his insect characters.

Wolfdietrich Schnurre, in the same year brought out Sternstaub und

(1) Heinz Risse: Belohne dich selbst; Bremen, 1953.

Sänfte. Die Aufzeichnungen des Pudels Ali, a book of literary satire in the form of an animal fable, then found a medium for his work in radio plays, and during the 1950's he must have written ten or a dozen which were broadcast. But then in 1957, he brought out a collection of fables entitled Liebe, böse Welt, which he followed up in 1958 with his by now very well-known Barfussgeschöpfe.⁽¹⁾

The pieces in this collection are very short and very varied in content, and yet they are of some interest. They are hardly parables at all, either in form or in content, the longest in the series being no more than six pages in length, while "Vertrauen", one of the shortest, is perhaps typical of them all:

Es klopft; der Kaminfeger ist da. Er ist barfuss, seine Zehen haben blutige Ränder. Ich bin der Einzige im Haus, der keinen Ofen besitzt; doch die Kaminklappen befinden sich in meiner Etage, immer schon war das so. Ich schiebe also den Schreibtisch von den Kaminklappen weg und hebe den Blumenkrug auf.

"Was soll das", fragt der Kaminfeger mürrisch. Ich entschuldige mich. Ich schiebe den Tisch wieder hin und setze auch wieder den Blumenkrug nieder. Nun noch das Seidenkissen und mein wertvollstes Buch unter die Klappe gelegt, und ich gehe hinaus. Als ich zurückkomme, ist der Schreibtisch mit Russ überschüttet, Kissen und Buch sind versengt, der Krug ist zerbrochen, die Kaminklappen hängen schief in den Angeln, und Wände und Decke sind mit blutigen Zehenabdrücken bedeckt. Nun ja, als Laie macht man sich nur schwer eine Vorstellung, wie schwierig Kaminfegen ist.

In this piece, as in the others, there is an anecdotal quality of brevity, yet it is not an anecdote. There is a quality of folk-legend and yet the piece is neither folk-tale nor Hausmärchen, but there seems a distinct link between Schnurre's Barfussgeschöpfe and Johann Peter Hebel's

(1) Wolfdietrich Schnurre: Barfussgeschöpfe; München, 1958.

Schatzkästlein des rheinischen Hausfreundes of 1811. Hebel appealed to the simple, ordinary people of his day, mostly country-folk, by writing of the world as seen through the eyes of other country-folk.

Schnurre uses a similar technique in his Barfussgeschöpfe collection. He is however writing not for the simpler country-folk of Hebel's day, but for the more sophisticated, more cynical townsfolk of the 1950's, so his characters are not simple peasants but sophisticated town-dwellers, to whom the grotesque concept of the chimney-sweep as a gnome-like figure with bare feet and bleeding toes brings to the piece the quality of folk-legend which Schnurre wants to achieve.

His characters must however have the same appeal for the present-day reader as Hebel's had for the reader of his time, so Schnurre presents his central figure in "Vertrauen" as an anonymous but sympathetic character, the victim of modern life. The fact that he is the only one in the whole building who does not ~~poss~~ possess a stove and yet the chimney-vents are located specifically in his flat introduces him to us at the outset as the victim of circumstances, while the additional remark : "immer schon war das so" is in itself a wry comment on modern man's uncomplaining acceptance of discomfort and worse simply because 'it has always been that way'.

The other sardonic comment of this particular piece is of course in the attitude of the characters whom we meet. On the one hand we have the central character himself, insignificantly anonymous, modest and helpful, thoughtful even : he moves the table and the vase away so that the craftsman, the skilled worker of today, may have the necessary room to work without first having himself to clear things away.

On the other hand there is the chimney-sweep, the skilled worker,

appearing as a grotesque figure, surly and churlish, ungrateful of the other's help, so that the central character, unwanted, goes out and leaves all his most cherished possessions in the room, trusting to the technical knowledge and skill of the professional.

The effective twist to the story is given at the end, when Schnurre, instead of having his character angry or vituperative at the mess and damage caused by the sweep, has him point out that all this must go to show just how difficult a job a chimney-sweep really has : 'als Laie macht man sich nur schwer eine Vorstellung, wie schwierig Kaminfegen ist.'

The style of "Vertrauen" is typical of the whole collection, which Schnurre then followed in the same year by Die Flucht nach Aegypten, which contains three amusing, if somewhat inconsequential stories illustrated by cartoon drawings. Then he brought out Das Los unserer Stadt,⁽¹⁾ a collection of no fewer than 108 pieces in which he replaces realism by a form of fantasy in which time and place are intermingled. Part of the action takes place - or seems to take place - in the Middle Ages, but events remain those of the present day, so that the effect is that of the reversed telescope - it lends an air of distance to the viewer. His subtitle here is Eine Chronik and his purpose is to give a panoramic view of society, its hopes and fears, and of the evils of militarism and civic obtuseness which seem inherent in it.

Schnurre is always quite clearly personally involved in his writing - a fact already apparent in Die Rohrdommel ruft jeden Tag, the book which first brought him to the forefront of writers and to the notice of the

(1) Wolfdietrich Schnurre : Das Los unserer Stadt; Olten/Freiburg, 1959.

public, but apart from showing his versatility in writing effectively in a variety of forms, these collections are interesting on two counts.

Firstly, his own personal standpoint seems to have shifted a little with the passage of time. In his early days he was still the individual, seeing the need for reform as a result of his own personal experience. He wrote as an individual about other individuals in their troubles. Now he is much more conscious of society as a whole and it is now society and the behaviour of society as an entity with which he is concerned. Because of that, his viewpoint is much more detached and he views human behaviour as it were from the outside.

Secondly, it is interesting that he should turn specifically to a parable form at all in order to convey his social criticism. Possibly it is to give him the detachment he feels he requires, possibly it is a deliberate return to a didactic, instructive form of writing in order to convey a moralistic point.

Whatever the reason, it helped to bring about a movement amongst others towards the parable form. Herbert Heckmann is one of these. His pieces are more in the tradition of the modern parable, which tends to drift into distortion and the grotesque - parabolische Schau - while those from the New Testament up to the 18th century hold more closely to the simple imagery of everyday experience.

Heckmann's collection⁽¹⁾ has as its shortest the story of 'Robinson', whose reference to Robinson Crusoe, the desert island, the search for safety and solitude all typify the desire to escape. But no man is himself an

(1) Herbert Heckmann : Das Portrait, Frankfurt, 1958.

island, nor can anything be achieved by wilfully cutting oneself adrift from the rest of the world. The original Robinson made the best of what to him had been a disaster, so he survived in making the effort. Here, however it is the deliberate intention of the central character to cast himself away, so he perishes, because his original purpose is wrong.

Even better as an example perhaps is "Ein Mensch".

Ein Mensch ängstlicher Natur, den allein schon die Vorstellung von Gefahr in Schrecken jagte, beschloss, sich zu sichern, um dem Grauen aus dem Wege gehen zu können, das überall auflauerte. Er kehrte sich von der Welt ab, errichtete in einsamer Gegend, die er freilich mit seinen Träumen bevölkerte, rings um sich eine Mauer, die er nach oben hin zu schliessen beabsichtigte, so dass sie zu einem kegelförmigen Gebäude hochwuchs. Er mühte sich mit Steinen ab, die er von überall her zusammentrug. Obwohl er mit grösster Umsicht ans Werk ging, konnte er es nicht verhindern, dass schliesslich der Schutz über ihn hereinbrach und ihn begrub. Da keiner in der Nähe weilte, konnte niemand die Feststellung treffen, dass ein solches Mass an Schutz keineswegs eine Sicherheit bietet. (p.113)

Here we have all the psychological anxiety of modern times expressed in the desire to escape. There is a longing for safety and seclusion. Instinct says to go to some remote area and there build an all-enveloping sheltering house, to shut out the threatening world outside.

But, and this is the point of the parable, or the moral of the story, being alone can itself be a handicap, not a help. The edifice collapses and there is nobody at hand to render aid, no one even to care. The hermit will perish because of his original misguided intention. Implied perhaps is the secondary moral that we would do better to consider how best we might live along with others, rather than how to escape from them.

It has generally been accepted that humour as such has never been a prominent characteristic of German literature as a whole, but it would be quite wrong to say that it has no humour, just as it would be wrong to say

that the Germans as a race are without humour.

Through the fun of Eulenspiegel, die Bierhumor of Hartleben, the cynism of Simplicissimus, the satanic sexuality of Ewers and the bawdiness of Bierbaum to the pictorial rhyming of Wilhelm Busch, there runs a strong vein of rudely humorous writing which cannot be dismissed out of hand.

Yet the humour is heavy and the comedy blunt. It lacks the tolerance of English humour, the sharpness of the French, the homely warmth of the Americans. It seldom seems spontaneous and sometimes one feels that the author is vaguely condescending (as in the case of Bergengruen) or that he is not really involved (as in the case of Wilhelm Schäfer, who at best is a raconteur of anecdotes).

The trouble probably has been in the attitude of the Germans as a whole, and the critics in particular, towards light literature in general. Marcel Reich-Ranicki makes the point⁽¹⁾ when he says:

'.... während die Engländer und Franzosen ihren grossen Unterhaltungsautoren - denn was anderes waren Balzac oder Dickens? - im Poetenhimmel die ehrenvollsten Plätze zuwiesen, wurde in Deutschland der Begriff "Unterhaltungsliteratur" fast zum Schimpfwort.'

After commenting on the "academic" requirements - however pseudo - which had to be satisfied before any work became "literary", he goes on to say:

'Bringt also das Kurzweilige den deutschen Autor in Verruf? Nein, das wäre natürlich übertrieben. Aber das Langweilige, das sich würdig gibt, hat in Deutschland immerhin die grössere Chance, ernst behandelt zu werden. Sogar die schwächsten expressionistischen Hymniker werden respektvoll analysiert. Die Beschäftigung mit den Versen Erich Kästners überlässt man hingegen lieber dem Ausland.'⁽²⁾

(1) and (2) : Marcel Reich-Ranicki: Wer schreibt, provoziert; DTV, 1966, pp.172 and 173.

Since the war however, possibly as a result of disillusionment in authoritative establishment, there has appeared, first in ordinary press comment, and then in short stories by admittedly a relatively small number of writers, a sardonic but tolerant outlook on life which is as welcome as it has been unusual.

Kurt Kusenberg, Wolfgang Hildesheimer, Herbert Heckmann, Heinz Risse and as usual, Heinrich Böll are amongst those who can observe and analyse the actions of their fellows, and then go on to recount absurdities with an admirable deftness of touch.

Consider for example "Eine grössere Anschaffung" by Wolfgang Hildesheimer:⁽¹⁾

Eines Abends sass ich im Dorfwirtshaus vor (genauer gesagt, hinter) einem Glas Bier, als ein Mann gewöhnlichen Aussehens sich neben mich setzte und mich mit vertraulicher Stimme fragte, ob ich eine Lokomotive kaufen wolle. Nun ist es zwar ziemlich leicht, mir etwas zu verkaufen, denn ich kann schlecht nein sagen, aber bei einer grösseren Anschaffung dieser Art schien mir doch Vorsicht am Platze. Obgleich ich wenig von Lokomotiven verstehe, erkundigte ich mich nach Typ und Bauart, um bei dem Mann den Anschein zu erwecken, als habe er es hier mit einem Experten zu tun, der nicht gewillt sei, die Katz im Sack zu kaufen, wie man es so schön sagt. Er gab bereitwillig Auskunft und zeigte mir Ansichten, die die Lokomotive vor vorn und von den Seiten darstellten. Sie sah gut aus, und ich bestellte sie, nachdem wir uns vorher über den Preis geeinigt hatten, unter Rücksichtnahme auf die Tatsache, dass es sich um einen second-hand-Artikel handelte.

Schon in derselben Nacht wurde sie gebracht. Vielleicht hätte ich daraus entnehmen sollen, dass der Lieferung eine anrüchliche Tat zugrunde lag, aber ich kam nun einmal nicht auf die Idee. Ins Haus konnte ich die Lokomotive nicht nehmen, es wäre zusammengebrochen, und so musste sie in die Garage gebracht werden, ohnehin der angemessene Platz für Fahrzeuge. Natürlich ging sie nur halb hinein. Hoch genug war die Garage, denn ich hatte früher einmal meinen Fesselballon darin untergebracht, aber er war geplatzt. Für die Gartengeräte war immer noch Platz.

(1) Wolfgang Hildesheimer : Lieblose Legenden, Frankfurt, 1952. (pp.88-90)

Bald darauf besuchte mich mein Vetter. Er ist ein Mensch, der, jeglicher Spekulation und Gefühlsäusserung abhold, nur die nackten Tatsachen gelten lässt. Nichts erstaunt ihn, er weiss alles, bevor man es ihm erzählt, weiss es besser und kann alles erklären. Kurz, ein unausstehlicher Mensch. Nach der Begrüssung fing ich an: "Diese herrlichen Herbsdüfte..." - "Welkendes Kartoffelkraut", sagte er. Fürs erste steckte ich es auf und schenkte mir von dem Kognak ein, den er mitgebracht hatte. Er schmeckte nach Seife, und ich gab dieser Empfindung Ausdruck. Er sagte, der Kognak habe, wie ich auf dem Etikett ansehen könne, auf den Weltausstellungen in Lüttich und Barcelona grosse Preise erhalten, sei daher gut. Nachdem wir schweigend mehrere Kognaks getrunken hatten beschloss er, bei mir zu übernachten und ging den Wagen einstellen. Einige Minuten darauf kam er zurück und sagte mit leiser, leicht zitternder Stimme, dass in meiner Garage eine grosse Schnellzugslokomotive stünde. "Ich weiss", sagte ich ruhig und nippte von meinem Kognak, "ich habe sie mir vor kurzem angeschafft." Auf seine zaghafte Frage, ob ich öfters damit fahre, sagte ich nein, nicht oft, nur neulich nachts hätte ich eine benachbarte Bäuerin, die ein freudiges Ereignis erwartete, in die Stadt, ins Krankenhaus gefahren. Sie hätte noch in derselben Nacht Zwillingen das Leben geschenkt, aber das habe wohl mit der nächtlichen Lokomotivfahrt nichts zu tun. Übrigens war das alles erlogen, aber bei solchen Gelegenheiten kann ich oft diesen Versuchungen nicht widerstehen. Ob er es geglaubt hat, weiss ich nicht, er nahm es schweigend zur Kenntnis, und es war offensichtlich, dass er sich bei mir nicht mehr wohl fühlte. Er wurde ganz einsilbig, trank noch ein Glas Kognak und verabschiedete sich. Ich habe ihn nicht mehr gesehen.

Als kurz darauf die Meldung durch die Tageszeitungen ging, dass den französischen Staatsbahnen eine Lokomotive abhanden gekommen sei (sie sei eines Nachts vom Erdboden - genauer gesagt vom Rangierbahnhof - verschwunden gewesen), wurde mir natürlich klar, dass ich das Opfer einer unlauteren Transaktion geworden war. Deshalb begegnete ich auch dem Verkäufer, als ich ihn kurz darauf im Dorfgasthaus sah, mit zurückhaltender Kühle. Bei dieser Gelegenheit wollte er mir einen Kran verkaufen, aber ich wollte mich in ein Geschäft mit ihm nicht mehr einlassen, und ausserdem, was soll ich mit einem Kran?

It is interesting to study in this story the humour of Hildesheimer, who was brought up during his formative years in England. At first sight he is reminiscent of Thurber, but this is probably because Thurber, though his drawings are essentially American in character, writes in an English style of prose. Hildesheimer is also English in style, and his humour is

much akin in the first instance to that of N.F. Simpson.

In this particular story for example, the humour depends for its effect on a straight-faced sense of logic expressed in language deliberately ordinary and conversational in tone. The humour lies in the insertion into this completely normal syntax of something of enormous, absurd, fantasy.

- a) 'fragte, ob ich eine Lokomotive kaufen wolle' - not a book, or a dog, or even a second-hand car, but a railway engine.
- b) 'Schon in derselben Nacht wurde sie gebracht' - the flat statement: it was delivered that very night - a railway engine?
- c) 'Hoch genug war die Garage, denn ich hatte früher einmal meinen Fesselballon darin untergebracht' - not my car, my motor-cycle or even my penny-farthing bicycle, but my barrage-balloon.

This is fantasy dressed in everyday habit, cf: ⁽¹⁾

- 'There's somebody at the door wanting you to form a government'.
- 'What does he look like?'

This style which contrasts and clashes normality and fantasy by their juxtapositioning in the syntax, contains also in this particular story the sharp contrasting of two extremes of human temperament as exemplified by the author on the one hand, lyrical, imaginative: 'Diese herrlichen Herbstdüfte!' and his cousin, literal and devoid of imagination: 'Welkendes Kartoffelkraut'.

There is a certain social comment here too, where the author, on finding that the brandy tastes of soap is informed coldly:

(1) N.F. Simpson: A Resounding Tinkle, Scene 1, London, 1958.

'....der Kognak habe, wie ich auf dem Etikett ansehen könne, auf den Weltausstellungen in Lüttich und Barcelona grosse Preise erhalten, sei daher gut'.

The average man's blind acceptance of the printed word is here exposed, albeit with a whimsical tolerance of human weakness.

Structurally, the story is set down as though it were being told by the narrator to a listening friend. By using the first person the author is able to present himself as a friendly, ordinary man, with it is true certain human frailties and eccentricities - his chief weakness being apparently his inability to refuse a "bargain".

The sentences are short and clear, with no involved subordinate clauses, no long adjectival-participial phrases, no pedantry of any kind. The opening, very much in the style of 'There I was, drinking a glass of beer and minding my own business,' is particularly effective here.

In his choice of words too, Hildesheimer is successfully evocative. In the opening paragraphs we find phrases like: Typ und Bauart; er gab bereitwillig Auskunft; second-hand-Artikel; Lieferung - all of which conjure up the atmosphere of business dealings, while the transformation of the cousin, at first so assured and overbearing, is admirably achieved by the judicious use of 'mit leiser, leicht zitternder Stimme', 'seine zaghafte Frage', 'er nahm es schweigend zur Kenntnis' and finally 'er wurde ganz einsilbig' - all these being phrases which imply much more than they actually say.

The final twist is given to the story by the volte-face of the last sentence, where the author, having presented himself throughout as being unable to resist any bargain from a barrage-balloon to a railway-engine -

and having been accepted by the reader in this eccentricity - now steps out of his given character with the question: '... und ausserdem, was soll ich mit einem Kran? '

While Hildesheimer certainly resembles his contemporary N.F. Simpson in England in this humour of the absurd, Simpson himself, writing for the stage, has in turn been likened to Christian Morgenstern, who wrote nonsense verse prior to the 1914 war, and whose seagulls all looked as if they were called Emma.

After Lieblose Legenden, Hildesheimer brought out a collection of stories entitled Ich trage eine Eule nach Athen, on the analogy of taking coals to Newcastle or porter de l'eau à la rivière. These are nonsense stories much more in the Thurber tradition because of the delightful illustrations by Paul Flora.⁽¹⁾

One of the most versatile of writers is Kurt Kusenberg, lecturer, art critic, former editor, philosopher and satirist. Born in Sweden, he has lived and travelled in most of the countries of Europe at some time or another. He has published books of reproductions of the work of Picasso, Thurber and other artists on whom he has also lectured. He has written radio plays, made long-playing records of talks, conversation pieces, and even films.

In his own stories, the elements of fantasy and reality alternate fluently, with absurdly humorous effect. Behind his humour however is the satirist's desire for betterment, for improvement in man's way of life, so that his caricaturing of the contemporary scene is purposeful as well as light-hearted.

(1) Wolfgang Hildesheimer: Ich trage eine Eule nach Athen, Zürich, 1956.

He has written almost innumerable humorous pieces, and has several collections of short stories to his credit, over a considerable period of time : Der blaue Traum, 1942; Herr Crispin reitet aus, 1948; Die Sonnenblumen, 1951; Wein auf Lebenszeit, 1955; Im falschen Zug, 1960; and Zwischen unten und oben, 1964.

D) GERD GAISER

The short story may be regarded as a mirror of its age, but it also reflects the attitudes and philosophies of the man who writes it. We have already seen this in regard to Borchert, Böll and Schnurre, all of them committed writers, whose personal philosophy is made quite clear in their writing.

If the author himself is quite clear in his own mind as to what he wants to say, what point he wants to emphasise, what moral he wants to show, then the story - even if it is in parable form - will be or should be equally clear in its exposition. But the more complex the character of the writer, the more complex may be the philosophy of his stories, and this would seem to be true at least of Gerd Gaiser, who provides a fascinating study, both in his work and in the enigma of his own life.

It is because of this that we now examine Gaiser and his work, at a point when we have considered the development from Borchert and the Kahlschlag, from Böll and Schnurre, into the 1950's, and before we begin to study the newer generation of writers who have followed after this 'experienced' group.

Gaiser was born in 1908, a son of the manse. He studied art during the 1920's in Stuttgart, Königsberg and Dresden, travelled in Spain, and became in 1935 a teacher of art.

In a period of upheaval and violence, he became involved - what teacher in Germany at that time, who wished to hold his post, did not? - so that his own beliefs and philosophies have been hotly disputed by later critics, and the undertones of his work have been the subject of adverse comment by Marcel Reich-Ranicki in his recent book⁽¹⁾, while he has been

(1) Marcel Reich-Ranicki: Deutsche Literatur in West und Ost, München, 1963.

as hotly defended by Curt Hohoff in his.⁽¹⁾

What does Gaiser himself say of the early inspiration which he found in National Socialism? It is a period of his career which is normally - understandably - kept in the background.

He has however stated to Horst Bienek⁽²⁾

"Die Jugendbewegung, die in meinen Schülerjahren noch virulent war, ist eine Angelegenheit der Zeitgeschichte. Kein Geheimnis ist, dass zwischen den zwei Kriegen allerlei Gedankenspekulationen geisterte, in den ein Phantast sich verfangen konnte, dem der Sinn für politische Realitäten abging. Dass schwere Täuschungen gedeihen konnten, dafür gibt es Exempel genug, selbst bei höchst philosophischen, bei politischen Köpfen. Ich war nicht dies noch jenes und gehöre nicht zu den Bevorzugten, die niemals irren Das ist alles ganz und gar vorbei."

An open admission of error, put to the account of youth - but Gaiser's first book of poems, Reiter am Himmel, appeared in 1941, when Gaiser was thirty-three years old. Its philosophy is as one might expect of that time - Reiche brechen, um sie besser zu bauen - with lyrical descriptions of conquered lands and of the young Germans who now as conquerors bestrode them.

At thirty-three Gaiser was no immature youth, and there is little doubt that he firmly believed, as did the vast majority of his compatriots at that time, that Germany, in the role of Europe's conscience had been called upon to destroy, then to re-organise the world. Ordnung is a keyword throughout Gaiser's work. His characters suffer at the hands of the Ordnungslosen, and a recurring theme in his novels at least, is that of the

(1) Curt Hohoff: Gerd Gaiser, Werk und Gestalt; München, 1962.

(2) Horst Bienek: Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern, DTV, 1965, p.271.

élite, who are born to rule, to lead, to organise, suffering at the hands of the untutored rabble. War is still for Gaiser a great adventure, a time for testing and proving for young manhood. Contemptuously in Das Schiff im Berg he makes the dismissive comment:⁽¹⁾

Die Nachbarschaften waren bequem und vertrauensselig, sie kannten bloss Frieden. (p.38).

His longer works may seem to contain a brooding element of regret, but what of his short stories, with which we are primarily concerned?

First of all we must remember always Gaiser's own personal background. Not only is he a capable artist, a painter who is fully trained in technique, widely travelled, conscious always of colour and shape, of light and shade, of the effect of visual imagery and of the value of a suitable setting as a background; not only is he a poet, full of words, seeking to bring lyric expression to his ideas, fond of the associative power of words and objects and of the symbolism of natural phenomena; but also he is - and this surely is of fundamental importance in his philosophy - the son of a minister of religion, and therefore aware from his earliest days of the existence of, or at least of the belief in the existence of, a superior controlling and guiding force, an 'outside' destiny, and conscious that life is a part of a sequence and that knowledge of death is a necessary complement to knowledge of life.

Only when one is cognizant of this personal background in Gaiser does the pattern of his theme become clearer. His first collection of stories, called Zwischenland, appeared in 1949.⁽²⁾ No title could have

(1) Gerd Gaiser: Das Schiff im Berg, München, 1955.

(2) Gerd Gaiser: Das Zwischenland, München, 1949.

been better chosen, because it is the setting for Gaiser's concept of man amidst a dimly-lit, misty terrain through which he must somehow find his way in order to attain....what?

In the story "Vornacht" (p.7.) he even defines the place:

Das Zwischenland. Da liegt es. Es dämmert. Wissen Sie, was das bedeutet, der schwache Streif ohne Begrenzung, draussen?

"Vornacht" contains most of Gaiser's characteristics and ideas.

The title represents a twilight - another kind of Zwischenland - a dreamlike state between life and whatever comes next. In this area, experience known and unknown overlaps and intertwines. In the story itself, Gornhoff tries to trace and explain the developments which made him as he is, and the narrator realises in a kind of dream sequence that the spirit of Gornhoff is restless, has to be restless, in order to rise above the creed of materialistic sufficiency advocated by his would-be mentor Dublasky. Gornhoff elects to pursue a course of action by which he knows he must inevitably perish. Indifferent now to the accepted values of ordinary life, he makes his choice of his own free will, without regret, and gives himself over to the superior force which guides his fate.

Nothing, for Gaiser, happens simply by chance. We always have the sense of man on his journey being driven towards his destiny. The use of the phrase 'sich treiben lassen' is typical: e.g. Das Zwischenland, p.88 'so liess er sich treiben und wollte aus diesem Treiben auch nicht heraus.'

And again, much later, in Am Pass Nascondo, p.44: Ich lag im Boot ausgestreckt und liess mich wiegen.⁽¹⁾

Gaiser's technique of narrative is often a dreamlike sequence of memories, images and sensations which drift and intermingle into ideas

(1) Gerd Gaiser : Am Pass Nascondo, München, 1960.

which are connected, although not necessarily clearly-defined, and in which the character progresses from one stage in his experience to another.

This is certainly the case in stories such as "Mittagsgesicht" or "Der Wind bringt die Zeit" in his collection Einmal und oft (1956), of which Hohoff says:

Die Geschichte wird zu einer Reihe von Punkten, die 'einmal und oft' aufeinander folgen, wobei 'folgen' nicht einmal zeitlich verstanden werden darf : Einmal und Oft sind zugleich, das Bild wiederholt sich.

Hohoff also maintains that for Gaiser, true fulfilment can be found only in 'das Land der Fülle und des Todes' and in Einmal und oft (p.77) we do find the sentence: 'Der Tod und die Fülle kommen aus ein und demselben Dunkel.'

One of the principles of Gaiser's work lies in the fact that, for Gaiser, there are several ranges of reality - that of the mind, that of the outside world, that perhaps of the poet as distinct from the rest of mankind. He uses the word 'Wirklichkeiten' to describe these realities, and the constant interweaving and alternating of them makes the fabric from which his stories are then put together.

The resultant effect is usually one of mystery, in a world of strange significances - a kind of Zwischenland of his own - where his characters, their actions and indeed the objects round about them are all directly related to the ideas to which the author wishes to give expression.

(1) Gerd Gaiser : Einmal und oft, München, 1956.

(2) Curt Hohoff : Gerd Gaiser, Werk und Gestalt; München, 1962.

Just what these significances are is by no means easy to determine. Like Ingeborg Bachmann (see p.150) Gaiser likes to stand at a lyrical extreme of prose expression, and he uses all the lyricist's power in establishing a setting which he feels is suitable to his lyric purpose. Indeed he sometimes goes to such lengths in so doing that he seems to take more trouble with the setting than with the development of any kind of plot, or of character, so that we often find strangely incomplete events, which remain incomplete and wholly unexplained. This may add to the effect of a mystic background, but the lack of tension means that a reader would hardly be held to the story for its own sake.

Patterns which Gaiser began in Zwischenland and Eimal und oft are continued in Gib acht in Domokosch, 1959, but the collection which is perhaps of the greatest interest as a study of Gaiser himself is probably Am Pass Nascondo, 1960.

Here all the stories are set in a mountain pass, which represents the mist-enshrouded route towards new certainty and knowledge, the border area between the known and the unknown. It is a setting contrived, like the 'grosse Strasse' of Zwischenland, as fitting to Gaiser's lyric purpose. In this case, the analogy of the valley, the gorge, the pass and the mountain, corresponding to the hopes, the fears, the depression and the troubles of mankind, makes obvious the significance of these natural features in each one of the stories, so that we may progress from 'das Schluchtengewirr' (p.6), which is the depth of experience at the nadir of human sensation, on through the pass itself to a point from which the Promised Land may at least be sensed, if not actually seen: '....ein Duft, der zugleich beruhigte und belebte, der undeutbare Geruch des anderen Landes' (pp.31,32).

It is in this collection that Gaiser's own credo is most readily discernible. The central figure on the journey through experience one feels is Gaiser himself, so that the whole becomes an expression of personal fate wrapped in lyric mysticism. It is difficult to trace any plot which would bring a connecting thread, however tenuous, to give to the stories a continuity of purpose. The fact that the collection has the same male character throughout, and that the same settings occur, might have served to link, but the objectivity of narration is impeded by the awareness that Gaiser himself is that central figure. Am Pass Nascondo is, in a way, like a novel of short stories (this has also been said of Das Schiff im Berg).

It is true that Gaiser himself says that Am Pass Nascondo is a collection of 'meditativ-lyrische Stücke' (Bienek, p.262) and then he goes on to explain his method of approach:

'.....es kann zuerst ein Wort da sein, ein Satz, ein vielleicht ganz zufällig aufgefangener und an sich banaler - vielleicht ein Name: von Klangbildern, von dem rhythmischen Fallen eines Satzes kann der Prozess seinen Anfang nehmen, der zu einer Erzählung führt.'

Gaiser is intrigued by the use of natural phenomena in their relationship to man, so we find springs, lakes, rivers, streams, floods, and ice all being used along with mists and mountains, light and shadow, sun and moon to suggest inscrutable and often menacing forces surrounding man in his quest. He uses the spring to suggest the truth hidden below the surface - e.g. "Morgen in Sogno" or "Das Wasser verbirgt sich im Berg".

Reference to the position of man in his uncertainty is made in "Die Schlangen sind unten" (Am Pass Nascondo, pp.84-5) in the following words:

Wir wussten noch nicht, wie wir hinauskommen würden und dorthin, wo wir zuhause waren. Herübergefahren, die Rückkehr ungewiss. Heraufgestiegen, und nichts angetroffen. Gesucht und nicht gefunden.

This Zwischenland of experience is essential to the development of the atmosphere which for Gaiser creates the story. Indeed Curt Hohoff maintains that for Gaiser the Zwischenland is a stage of the creative process:

Im Wachbewusstsein besitzen alle eine eindeutige gemeinsame Welt. Im Schlaf aber wendet sich jeder davon in die eigene..... Der Traum ist die Geburtsstätte der Erzählung.⁽¹⁾

Sometimes, as in "Kies nach Monastir", the boundary area is one of time, not terrain, while in the earlier story "Vornacht", at noon - neither forenoon nor afternoon - time is at a standstill:

'.....zu Mittag, wenn alles im Glanz gebadet ist, an der Kühle des Wassers, wenn du die Hand eintunkst, und du hängst zwischen Wachen und Schlaf zu gelähmt, um zu wissen, wieviel die Uhr zeigt, und um auf etwas zu warten.' (Zwischenland, p.41).

The analogy of life's pilgrimage is emphasised by the religious note which is sometimes struck - e.g. the use of the word 'das Kloster' in "La Vigna" and "Morgen in Sogno" - but any religious philosophy which emerges here, unlike that found in Böll or in Borchert, is valid not for mankind as a whole, but for Gaiser alone.

Reference has already been made to Gaiser's use of individual words - cf. his 'Wirklichkeiten' - and another one which frequently recurs and is significant to his lyric approach is 'der Zusammenhang'. Ideas and images which normally are in no context related are obviously difficult to link. Gaiser does it thus:

(1) Curt Hohoff: Gerd Gaiser, Werk und Gestalt; München, 1962, p.12.

----- der Tote und diese Landschaft, worin er, Ertinger, sich bewegte, gewann plötzlich einen unverständlichen und anspruchsvollen Zusammenhang.⁽¹⁾

And again:

'Ich kam in eine Zeit, die mich vom Zusammenhang mancher Dinge überzeugte....'⁽²⁾

In his lyric approach to narrative, Gaiser stands in striking contrast to such writers as Borchert, Böll and Lenz, but is much more closely akin to Ingeborg Bachmann, as we shall shortly see. Many of his 'lyric' stories, as distinct from those which are obviously based on his own war-time experience - e.g. "Revanche", "Der Hund von Scholm", "Der Forstmeister", "Kahle Weihnacht", - are noticeably longer than those of most present-day writers of short stories. In form, they sometimes approach the Novelle - in fact "Gianna aus dem Schatten" is a Novelle, and although the theme may be the same as that treated by other writers of the time, the structural approach is quite different.

Consider this opening sentence:

'Darin stimmen wir gewöhnlich überein, dass in den Wintern früher mehr Kraft steckte und deshalb auch mehr Lustigkeit, dass sie ganz andere Widersacher waren und darum auch bessere Gefährten mit ihrem Eisrauch und ihren Bartkristallen, und dass auch die Sommer ganz ohne Zweifel einst feuriger niederwallten : in den Hanggärten, wo wir spielten, stockte das Arom der schwarzen Johannisbeere; die Stachelbeeren, pelzig wie Raupen, sprangen süß-schwärzig auf; der Salat hatte Namen und hiess etwa Trotzkopf; die Blumen hiessen Amaranth oder Bartnelke oder Brennende Lieb''.⁽³⁾

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- (1) Gerd Gaiser: "Mittagszeit" in Einmal und oft, München, 1956, p.140.
 (2) Gerd Gaiser: "Über die Stunden kommen" in Am Pass Nascondo, München, 1960, P.168.
 (3) Gerd Gaiser: "Von den Farben der vergangenen Tage"; Einmal und oft, p.57.

Here we have an opening sentence of 84 words, rambling, discursive, and sickly-sentimental, beginning a story concerning the summer of the release from the prisoner-of-war camps. It is a fusion of style which does not succeed.

In another story of experience in time of war, Gaiser opens thus:

'Greve hatte eines Morgens in Scholm ein verwunderliches Erlebnis: eine Eisenstange in seinen Händen, so ging er eine der mit gestutzten Robinien bestandenen Strassen der kleinen Stadt entlang; die Strasse war leer, die Häuser grau, alle Läden niedergelassenf.(1)

Most modern writers would have avoided the long participial-adjectival phrase and would have made a sentence something along these lines:

'Die Strasse war leer, die Häuser grau, alle Läden niedergelassen, als Greve hinausging. Er griff die Eisenstange fest in seiner Hand.'

Gaiser likes adjectives, but he uses them only to describe, and not to imply. Compare the above openings with one of Borchert's:

'Er stand auf dem windüberheulten nachtleeren Bahnsteig in der grossen grauverrusssten mondeinsamen Halle.'(2)

There are adjectives there too, but they imply a great deal more than do Gaiser's.

Or if we think of Böll's opening to "Der Mann mit den Messern":(3)

'Jupp hielt das Messer vorne an der Spitze der Schneide und liess es lässig wippen, es war ein langes, dünn-geschliffenes Brotmesser, und man sah, dass es scharf war.'

Here the reader is immediately intrigued by the picture and by the implied problem given him. Why is Jupp holding the breadknife by the blade like that? The 'liess es lässig wippen' implies that he is testing

(1) Gerd Gaiser: "Der Hund von Scholm"; Einmal und oft, p.71.

(2) Wolfgang Borchert: "Bleib doch, Giraffe"; Gesamtwerk, Hamburg, 1949, p.64.

(3) Heinrich Böll: "Der Mann mit den Messern"; Wanderer kommst du nach Spa..., Köln, 1950, p.16.

it - for throwing perhaps? And why the emphasis on the sharpness of the knife? Does he intend to use it on somebody?

We can think of an even shorter opening by Lenz, designed to strike the reader by the apparent contradiction in terms: 'Nichts bereitet mir grössere Sorgen als Heiterkeit.'⁽¹⁾

In his descriptions too, both of landscapes and of characters, Gaiser does not attempt the modern technique of implication at all, but prefers the rolling phrases and word-pictures of a previous age, e.g.

Im Hinterland herrschten die Partisanen. Es war eine wirre Hügelei, die wenig trug, Schafweiden, Oleaster und schmale Weingärten, ein paar versprengte Gehöfte dazwischen, nirgends hin sah man weit, und grosse Herzmuscheln und Meerhörner staken überall in den Felshöckern eingebacken.⁽²⁾

Even in a story such as "Der Forstmeister", which has only about 1100 words in all, there are sentences of over 50 words in length.

Gaiser is seldom entirely successful in attempting to fuse the lyric and the narrative approach in his work, as he does for example in "Revanche", "Der Hund von Scholm", "Die schlesische Gräfin", "Der Forstmeister" and "Kahle Weihnacht".

This does not mean however, that these stories are not effectively written. Technically, some fall between two stools, but "Kahle Weihnacht" in particular is a story of such immense symbolism and artistic content, that it merits closer examination.

The scene is set in Italy in wartime, with the Germans trying desperately to stem the tide against them. It is Christmas, presumably in 1944.

(1) Siegfried Lenz: "Der Amtsdoktor"; Das Feuerschiff, Hamburg, 1960.

(2) Gerd Gaiser: "Kahle Weihnacht" in Einmal und oft, München, 1956, p.121ff.

The opening sets not only the scene, but also the mood:

Der Tag vor Weihnachten war damals, als sie ankamen und uns die achtzehn Maschinen zusammenschmissen.

The end is already in sight.

This is important to the atmosphere of the whole story. Gaiser again is in a kind of Zwischenland. In the first place, for the Germans altogether, it is a time of crisis: behind them are the glorious days of conquest, with the war-machine running smoothly, efficiently, ruthlessly and supremely confidently, but now the machine is at breaking-point, stretched to the uttermost and ready to collapse. Ahead lies....what?

For the narrator himself all this is reflected at a personal level, for him it is a matter first of his own unit, and then of his own future; the little HQ where they could not spare the men to mount a guard at night, but instead had dogs and slept 'mit der Waffe hinter dem Kopf'; the 18 aircraft which they tried so hard to camouflage and protect, only to have them destroyed as a Nachmittagsunterhaltung by the enemy.

Yet what difference would the loss of 18 aircraft make? The difference between nichts and gar nichts.

It is in this mood of depression and defeat that Gaiser sets the story, and it might be inferred that for Gaiser himself, this particular period marked the approach to the point of decision, that point at which for him as an individual, the scales might fall from his eyes.

The basis of the whole narrative is one of contrast and symbolism, alternating at each stage in the development.

It starts with the implied contrast, the position of the Germans now, backs to the wall, fighting a rearguard, delaying action - delaying

what? only ultimate defeat, a defeat which would have been inconceivable a year ago.

The position is clearly indicated: Im Hinterland herrschten die Partisanen. The use of the word herrschten in regard to partisan troops - in the early days these would have been treated with disdain and a punitive force sent out to deal with them.

Then, early in the story, there is the appearance of the three women - anonymous, somewhat mysterious - tre donne - all in black, with the aroma of cedarwood:

Sie standen in Schwarz, ein Geruch von Zedernholz stieg aus den Falten, die ihre müden Glieder umschlossen. Einer liefen die Tränen übers Gesicht.

Three grief-stricken women - there is strong symbolism in their appearance, in the number, in the near-silence of their plea: are they the women of Calvary: Are they here to mourn, or to foretell?

Then there is the clash and contrast between the author on the one hand, the 'amateur' soldier, the artist, the thinker, the man of culture and the sergeant-major on the other, the professional soldier, the realist, the Philistine, whose attitude to the narrator is defined at once:

'....Er fiel nicht aus der Form, doch beherrschte er jene Korrektheit, die Verachtung und Hartnäckigkeit ausdrückt.'

And again, the attitude of the sergeant-major is shown towards others:

'....Wir sind kaputt, sagen sie, und wir sollen hier frieren, damit im Sommer die Ithaker Schatten haben?'

The contemptuous use of the word die Ithaker leads on to his statement: '.....Wir stehen in einem Land, das uns verraten hat.' Again we see the attitude of the professional soldier towards an ally who has shown himself to be unworthy.

Then after 'discussing' the situation, the sergeant-major - ein Spiess sorgt vor - had the whole avenue of trees cut down. Here the symbolism becomes more complex. Obviously the graphic imagery of the destruction of the avenue of trees, leading as it does to the house of God, along with the phrase 'Die Zeit der alten Bäume war vorbei', indicates the end of an era, of a philosophy, at least in the mind of the destroyer. And there is the fact that the narrator, on hearing that the trees have gone, does not need any further explanation of the act : 'Ich wusste sogleich Bescheid ' Why? Because the sergeant-major, a capable, efficient, professional soldier had very competently felled them all. He is representative of the forces of war and conquest. His cliché : 'Es ist Krieg.....wir stehen in einem Land, das uns verraten hat.....' is for him adequate. In war, people must be hurt, what else could they expect : Gianna must leave her burning home : the trees must come down. Trees and aircraft, destroy and be destroyed.

But here the atmosphere comes into play. The elegiac tone which Gaiser evokes :

'.... Die Allee fehlte. Die schwarzwipfligen, die hundertjährigen Zypressen waren fort. Es war eine feuchte Luft, dünn und verzagt. Die drei Frauen weinten.'

This is linked with the comment which derives from the symbolism:

'Die Zeit der alten Bäume war vorbei. Es war zu spät, wir hatten nicht vermocht, die alten Bäume zu schützen, und die drei Frauen konnten darum klagen, aber nicht mehr bitten für sie. '

For the sergeant-major there can be no thought of consideration for the inhabitants: '....Wir sollen hier frieren, damit im Sommer die Ithaker Schatten haben?'

The world has changed from the days of Fra Angelico and his olive-trees. Now the world has become kahl - stripped of everything, trees, pity, humanity.

Thus the symbol and what it suggests : the symbol poses the position that the world is in, while the atmosphere serves to emphasise it.

The other symbol of the story is of course the one of Christmas itself, and here the symbol evolves from the setting of atmosphere, rather than atmosphere being used to emphasise what the symbol already told us - e.g. the felling of the trees.

The feeling at the Christmas Eve feast is one of total depression :

'....Verdrossen und niedergestimmt merkten wir, als die Nacht kam, dass es der Heilige Abend war; niemand mochte ihn feiern.'

They do attempt to celebrate in fitting style :

'....Wir assen alle zusammen, unsere Leute.....alle zusammen in dem Sälchen, wo der Raub der Europa, eine Kopie nach Tizian, an der Wand hing.'

But the Stimmung is not forthcoming. Even the candles, which have been delivered specially, can only sputter like damp squibs. It is perhaps important to notice that it is the national - i.e. the true German - spirit of Christmas they hope will help them:

'....vergebens warteten wir, dass die Weihnachtsstimmung zu uns herniederstiege, die deutsche Weihnachtsstimmung, auf die wir uns verliessen.'

Yet it is an Italian woman with an alien intonation who insists on her 'S-tille Nacht', and when it is played it serves only to accentuate the artificiality, the emptiness and the hopelessness of the situation.

Indeed in the mind of the narrator, it acts as an image of the downward progression of his world and all its values - the empty, destroyed

world of conquest, embodied even in the picture 'The Rape of Europa' on the wall, the diluted national 'deutsche Weihnachtsstimmung' guttering to a feeble finish as the candles burn away, while the most German of all Christmas tunes hastens the era to its end :

'.....die Nadel kratzte, und die Platte schwang herum, dazu prasselten die Kerzen herunter, schnell, schnell, immer herum, schneller herum schneller das Ende, das eigene Land schon überrannt, und so sassen wir, wozu und zu welchem Ende? Nur schnell. Es roch nach Harz, und das Gesöff, das wir da hatten, roch nach Haaröl, so ging alles hin, und näher herzu kam das Ende.'

Were these the thoughts in Gaiser's own mind? That the old régime, the Thousand-Year Reich, had been found wanting? That it now offered nothing to those who had followed it? Or is his reference still a general one?

Whatever we choose to read into the personal position of Gaiser at that point in his life, there is no doubt that the narrator of the story is shown as reaching the nadir of his fortunes. And it is at this point that Dossi, the Italian airman, makes his contribution.

For Dossi also, the world had apparently nothing positive to offer. Always in his verse we are told, the perfectly-wrought beauty ended in hideous, discordant anti-climax. To the narrator it seemed that Dossi's whole inheritance and being was exactly as the world of emptiness in which they lived.

'.....jener Bodensatz war vielleicht etwas Saturnisches, eine Mitgift jener uralten Erde, etwas Grausames, das dem Heil nicht trauen mochte und von dem auch Gianna befallen war.'

And yet this very ordinary man - un vero italiano che beve grappa e che fuma toscani - now apparently has inspiration, new hope, something

at least, when nobody else has anything.

As the narrator descends further and further into the depths of hopelessness, down into the valley, so Dossi ascends transfigured with brightness. He reaches a zenith with something positive in his very state of being - and here the two symbols link : as the chapel is left alone, looking down on the remnants of the avenue of trees, Dossi is last seen still going onwards and upwards, proclaiming, as it were, new hope for the world - and it is here that the two symbols unite, because of course they both embody the same abstract significance : Cristo è nato!

And what is the significance? It is religion and the life more abundant that Christ brought to the world. This is simple enough, but two things are important here, the first one being that this new hope does not come from any politically-inspired movement or cult, but from the earth itself. Dossi is described thus :

'....Dossi hatte ein braunes, eher rundliches Gesicht, und in seinen Zügen war etwas Langsames, Bäuerliches, das sich an Fliegern selten findet.'

And as un vero italiano he was certainly no superman. His inheritance of hope does come from an 'ancient soil'. He is as the shepherds were - those natural men who related the new way of life most immediately to their existence in the only way they knew, the way of the earth and the elements.

This stands in direct contrast with the shallowness and the affected virtues and standards set by the dying régime.

The second point of importance could be Gaiser's own standpoint here, bearing in mind that he himself is a son of the manse, from which he must

have wandered a considerable distance over the years. Is he here acknowledging a long-neglected truth, an early upbringing? Is that why he views the end with new hope? It is possible for the 'end to be a beginning' if the ground is cleared and prepared first.

One cannot examine Gaiser's work in any detail without becoming aware of the extraordinary complexity in the character of the author himself, and of the degree of this complexity which he brings to his work.

The stories in which he himself finds the greatest pleasure and satisfaction are probably those which he describes as "meditativ-lyrisch". He has said :⁽¹⁾

'Der Weltstoff ist chaotisch, und Sinn und Ordnung hineinzusehen, gelingt nur noch wenigen. Aber wir können die Welt sehen, und im Sehen wird geleistet. Denn im Sehen unterscheiden wir, und indem wir sehen, machen wir uns ein Bild. Ein Bild zu machen, ist eine Weise des Ordnenens..'

Gaiser himself constructs, as we have seen, images and pictures, places, worlds even, in his mind's eye, one idea being a stepping-stone to another, with his central character moving on through nebulous terrain to the next vantage point. Again he pointed out :

'Was ein positiver Held ist, weiss ich nicht so recht.... Soweit ich sehe, ist der epische Held immer durch das Erleiden, durch die Kette des Erleidens bestimmt, von Odysseus bis Don Quijote.' (Bienek, p.266).

The development of such narrative depends upon artistic or lyric impulse - and Gaiser is well-equipped with both - but the structure is often so loose that it cannot bear close scrutiny. These are his lyric pieces, and they reflect that side of his character.

(1) Horst Bienek : Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern, DTV, 1965, p.266.

A story like "Kahle Weihnacht" reflects another side. It is difficult to decide whether Gaiser is here describing what was not only a turning point of his war experience, but also a turning-point in his own political existence - a point at which he did in fact change - or whether it is merely the point at which he might have changed.

By the time he wrote the story, if he had changed, he was now seeing it as an established fact, from his new viewpoint, but there is no evidence that this is so. On the other hand, if he had not at that time started afresh, is he then in the story simply recognising that this is where he might have done so - the end which might have been a beginning?

It is interesting here to compare the men whose work we have studied in some detail. Borchert will always remain the man who made the first tremendous impact, the representative of lost youth - of those Germans who were destroyed by the regime - and as such his place is secure.

Böll, the quiet man who went to war because he had to, came back filled with experience and strengthened in his resolve, to become the 'ordinary man's' representative in literature. His central characters have neither rank nor title, but they all suffer, survive and benefit from their experience. With the changing, developing scene Böll has continued to represent the ordinary German, or the man he still believes to be the ordinary German.

Schnurre began, like Böll, as a representative of a group - the returning soldiers - but he did not continue to identify himself for long with the others. Where Böll tries to influence by persuading his reader to identify himself with the 'ordinary' central character of the story, amidst the problems of contemporary life, Schnurre turns first to

the fable, then to the parable and to a more acid form of satire than that of Böll, who makes his appeal by setting himself up in his many first-person stories as the likeable little man of faith who comes out on top.

Gaiser is like none of these. Gaiser writes for himself - So lange ich schreibe, vermag ich an keinen Leser zu denken - (Bienek p.269). He does not try to influence the lives or actions of any of his readers, nor is he likely to do so, but he will certainly give rise to argument.

Writing always reflects certain facets at least of the author's character, and as the men themselves differ, so also does their writing. Borchert was young, highly-strung, emotional and sensitive and his writing reflects all of those qualities - think of his "Generation ohne Abschied", his "Jesus macht nicht mehr mit", of "Der viele viele Schnee", of "Radi". Yet there is an additional poetic quality which runs throughout his work, and which is expressed, not by any high-flown 'literary' language, but by his poetic use of ordinary words to express an idea : 'die Tür seufzte...', 'sie weinte dabei, die Tür', 'die ewige Stille', 'die Steine stöhnen..... Weil sie russische Steine sein müssen'.

The language of the narrative remains simple enough for him to be called the fore-runner of the Kahlschlag, yet the impression he makes on the reader is always more poetic than that given by the narrative of either Böll or Schnurre, who both concentrate in their early work on the factual simplicity of narrative which was their strength. Even when Schnurre for example uses a bittern's cry as the focal point of his story - and how many of his readers have ever either heard or seen a bittern? - it brings additional reality, not any poetic quality, to his narrative.

Böll and Schnurre may be quoted side by side in reference to the early days, because both were returning soldiers and both wrote of their experiences, so that their early stories are often similar in setting and in content, if not always in style, for Böll was less consciously devoting himself to Hemingway than was Schnurre at that time. "Damals in Odessa", "Auch Kinder sind Zivilisten", "Aufenthalt in X", "Steh auf, steh doch auf" by Böll and "Die Rückkehr", "Das Manöver", "Der Ausmarsch" und "Das Begräbnis" by Schnurre have the same content of bitterness and the pain of war. Schnurre makes more use of dialectal forms and colloquialisms than does Böll - e.g. in the opening to "Man sollte dagegen sein" :

'An der Wand, überm Geschworenentisch ist n weisser Fleck.
Hing wohl mal n Führerbild. Damals.' (p.59)

During the 1950's, as we have seen, their paths separate and while Böll continues to develop his original style, applying it now to civilian life and to the new society as it develops - e.g. in "Wie in schlechten Romanen" or "Es wird etwas geschehen", Schnurre turns instead to parable and fable with a different, more detached attitude to his writing.

Gaiser the writer, remains apart, as does Gaiser the man. As an artist and poet, we might expect him to have something in common with Borchert, but this is not the case. Where Borchert puts poetry in simple words into an idea, Gaiser often juggles with words to produce a poetic effect which is contrived. True, he describes his later pieces as 'meditativ-lyrisch', so that his ideas may be allowed freedom to roam, but 'lyrical' surely need not be synonymous with 'nebulous', and from his Zwischenland to Am Pass Nascondò, Gaiser concentrates so much on atmosphere that he ignores most of the techniques of short story structure.

(1) Wolfdietrich Schnurre: Man sollte dagegen sein; Olten/Freiburg, 1960.

An exception to this is his "Kahle Weihnacht", which has so much to recommend it. It is artistic in almost every sense: in its setting in the land of Fra Angelico, in descriptive colour, in imagery and allegory, indeed in its whole concept. It makes a rewarding study.

E) THE 'NEW' WRITERS OF THE 1950's

By the second half of the 1950's the popularity of the short story was firmly established, and an additional stimulus was brought to it at this time by its widespread use on radio networks. Short stories were heard as well as read by a huge public. Many of the radio networks also offered substantial prizes, not only for plays, but also for short stories. In one competition, radio Bremen offered prizes for the best treatment of a given theme, and sixteen of the stories submitted were then published in book form by DTV.⁽¹⁾

By now too, new, younger writers were attracting attention. In their teens at the outbreak of war, for which they can therefore hardly be held responsible, the first years of their majority came at the time of Germany's collapse. They belong to a generation which cannot conveniently be classified under such group headings as Marxist, Pacifist, Christian, Catholic, Jew - they may have grown up with ideological sympathies and antipathies, but they have avoided doctrinaire established philosophy.

Among them are such figures as Ingeborg Bachmann, Heinz von Cramer, Herbert Eisenreich, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Günter Grass, Siegfried Lenz, Heinz Piontek, Klaus Roehler and Martin Walser. This is the generation so significant in contemporary literature in Germany today. They are the present-day believers, acknowledging no traditional creed, doubtful of establishment, yet sincere of purpose.

In 1944, Siegfried Lenz was 18 years old and had been called up to the

(1) H. Lamprecht (Ed.): Ungewisser Tatbestand: 16 Autoren variieren ein Thema, DTV, 1964.

German navy. In 1951, his first novel was published. There followed another in 1953, and in 1955 he brought out his first collection of short stories under the title So zärtlich war Suleyken.⁽¹⁾

By this time he was committed to full-time writing and his output was already considerable and varied, with two more novels and a good deal of material for radio. He did however produce more collections of short stories : Jäger des Spotts, 1958; Das Feuerschiff, 1960; then, later, Der Spielverderber, 1965.

In this, his first collection, he shows himself to be sensitive and affectionate without being sentimental in depicting the lost home which also represents his own lost youth. The pieces are miniatures, but like good miniatures, may not be dismissed as being trivial. He succeeds apparently without effort in fusing motifs of fantasy with realism. His language is carefully chosen, and dialectal expression, outlandish names (Plew, Jegelka, Urmoneit, Zappka, Griegull and Arafka) and a tendency to dwell on rural meals and rural appetites, give a certain breadth and character to his telling, without ever reducing the quality to mere colloquialism. The stories contain a warmth of gentle humour, refreshingly free from political cynicism.

Later, his theme is often the loneliness of man, and he tells his stories with the objectivity of the detached spectator, interested but unaffected by what goes on around him. Sometimes Lenz brings this calculated objectivity into the actual telling of his story, as for example in "Die Lieblingsspeise von Hyänen",⁽²⁾ in which he depicts himself sitting in a

(1) Siegfried Lenz : So zärtlich war Suleyken; Hamburg, 1955.

(2) Siegfried Lenz : "Die Lieblingsspeise von Hyänen" in Das Feuerschiff, Hamburg, 1960.

restaurant or bar, where he sees an American accompanied by two ladies, who then go out, leaving the American alone. The American begins drinking, invites the author across to join him and unburdens himself of his story.

A former pilot, he wanted to make a pilgrimage back to Europe, but because he had brought his wife and daughter with him, who were much more interested in shopping expeditions, he had seen none of the places he had travelled so far to see. An ex-pilot and man of decision, he had now become the puppet of the women in his life.

Here, although Lenz casts a sanguine eye at the matriarchal rule in American society, he makes no comment on it, tells his story entertainingly and factually, and leaves it at that. In his observation of men, he combines imagination and powers of perception to a high degree, and this is again apparent in "Der Anfang von etwas",⁽¹⁾ where a seaman, due to rejoin his ship, an old fireship, reaches the pier where they had put in for repair, only to find the ship gone. The weather is icy and windy. He goes back into town. His shrewish wife finds no pleasure in his company and waits only for him to return to sea, so he avoids her by going to a bar. A waitress appears and is startled at seeing him. Obviously there has been something between them. He drinks and thinks... He needs a new start. Skilfully Lenz builds up the atmosphere till the reader can believe he and the waitress could build a new life. It is also New Year....

A young girl brings in the evening papers. The barman idly glances at the headlines. A ship has been rammed and lost with all hands. The

(1) Siegfried Lenz : "Der Anfang von etwas" in Das Feuerschiff, Hamburg, 1960.

seaman looks, his interest caught. It is his ship. His name is listed among the crew. He takes up his kitbag and goes out, down to the river. At the pier he flings his kit far out among the broken ice, then he goes slowly back towards the town.

Lenz is another writer who has absorbed much of the Hemingway technique in his work. In both of these stories, his dialogue, apparently inconsequential, apparently trivial, like Hemingway's is very effective in suggesting a background, an undertone, of emotion.

- Gehst du schon? fragte sie.
- Ich komme zurück.
- Wann?
- Gleich Paula. Geh' wieder hinein.
- Ich muss dich sprechen, Harry.
- Ich weiss. Es dauert nicht lange. (p.66)

Also his ending is reminiscent of Hemingway.

Der Koffer..... rutschte ins offene Wasser. Er sank nicht. Er sog mit Wasser voll und trieb, eingeklemmt von Eisschollen, den Strom hinab. Hoppe wartete, bis Koffer und Karton hinter dem weissen Gitter des Schneetreibens verschwunden waren, dann schnippte er die Kippe der Zigarette fort und ging langsam durch das Schneetreiben zur Stadt hinauf. (p.68)

Compare that with :

The snow had crusted hard. The road ran up the hill into the pine tree.

They took down their skis from where they leaned against the wall of the inn. Nick put on his gloves. George was already started up the road, his skis on his shoulder. Now they would have the run home together. ("Cross-country Snow"). (p.151)

Or again :

Nick stood up on the log, holding his rod, the landing net hanging heavy, then stepped back into the water and splashed ashore. He climbed the bank and cut back into the woods, toward the high ground. He was going back to camp. He looked back. The river just showed through the trees. There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp. ("Big Two-hearted River") (1) (p.184)

(1) Ernest Hemingway : "Cross-country Snow" and "Big Two-hearted River", both in The Fifth Column and the first 49 stories; London, 1939.

Like Hemingway, Lenz here uses short, terse sentences, with simple adjectives, giving the impression of matter-of-factness particularly suitable for stories of action, rather than philosophical thought.

It is interesting at this point to interpolate remarks by Lenz himself on his attitude to Hemingway.⁽¹⁾ First of all he says :

'Der Schriftsteller, den ich beinahe widerstandslos bewunderte, als ich selbst versuchte, ein Schriftsteller zu werden, war Ernest Hemingway.' (p.50)

He goes on to discuss Hemingway's ways of thinking; how his characters are motivated, not by any logical thought-process but by the near-instinctive reaction of the hunter, the boxer, the fighter, the man under the rules of war; how the Hemingway style reflects these ideas, and how he, Lenz, after his war - which he entered at a few months over sixteen years of age - looked for perspective and found it in Hemingway.

'Ich versuchte, das Schreiben zu lernen, und so, wie er es bei Anderson, Twain und Ford Madox Ford gelernt hatte, lernte ich es nach Möglichkeit bei ihm.' (p.54)

Here Lenz mentions stories modelled directly on Hemingway and admits that he is now astounded, on re-reading his own "Geschichten aus dieser Zeit", at how close his stories were to those on which they were based.⁽²⁾

Then, he says, he reached a stage when he began to feel the lack of his own participation in his own stories, and to feel the need for independence. So for a time he turned to satire and stories of social criticism (one of which we are shortly to discuss in detail), which had nothing

(1) Siegfried Lenz : Beziehungen; Hamburg, 1970.

(2) Siegfried Lenz : Geschichten aus dieser Zeit - sub-title to Jäger des Spotts; Hamburg, 1958.

to do with Hemingway, and he quotes "Mein verdrossenes Gesicht"; "Der seelische Ratgeber" and "Der grosse Wildenberg" - all in Jäger des Spotts - as examples.

By now he felt that Hemingway's perspectives, limited as they were by purely artistic intent, could not include relationships, conflicts and motives which to Lenz were important in the life around him - just as important as the reality of conflict and the heroic moments of catastrophe were to Hemingway. Lenz came to realise what Hemingway never did, that moments other than the proximity of death could merit or indeed even confer dignity.

So, as a counter to Hemingway's belief that misfortune lay in the emptiness of an ending, with everything worthwhile over and done with, for Hemingway never looked to a future, Lenz now wrote "Der Anfang von etwas", whose content we have examined. Hemingway's "The End of Something" ends with Nick Adams, his affair with Marjorie over, shoving the boat out on to the water, and she rows away.

Harry Hoppe, at the end of "Der Anfang von etwas" seizes his chance, throws his pack into the icy water and turns back to the town, to the 'beginning of something'.

Of the Hemingway style, Lenz says in his Beziehungen:

'Es ist ein Stil der Strenge, der Sparsamkeit, der Einfachheit. Sein typischer Satz ist gekennzeichnet durch gewissenhafte Schlichtheit. Sein Satz stellt fest oder verbindet mehrere kurze Aussagesätze durch eine Konjunktion; er ist unbedingt rhythmisch und eingängig auch in der Monotonie. Alle Wahrnehmungen des Schriftstellers werden unmittelbar, unverändert, ungefiltert mitgeteilt; Hemingway gibt streng darauf acht, jederzeit aus dem Spiel zu bleiben, das heisst: er vermeidet es als Autor, sich zwischen Geschehnis und Leser zu drängen.' (p.62)

When asked by Marcel Reich-Ranicki in an interview in 1969, which he also quotes in his book⁽¹⁾, as to which German writers of the postwar period had influenced him in his literary development, Lenz replied: 'Was man in der Kurzgeschichte machen kann, darüber habe ich manches von Borchert und Böll gelernt.'

In another recent book, which consists of an exchange of letters on literature⁽²⁾, Helmut Heissenbüttel describes an occasion - presumably in 1968 or early 1969 - when he attended a meeting of the Gruppe 47 and listened to the readings there. Of one particular reading, by Siegfried Lenz, he makes the following comment:

'Das war in einem fast altmodischen Sinn ein Teil einer ausführlichen Novelle, dem Typus nach zurückzuführen bis auf Storm oder Keller. Aber ich habe mich nachträglich gefragt, ob nicht gerade die Kunstmittel, die Redeweise, die dies Stück Erzählung unterscheidbar und definierbar machten, daran Schuld waren, dass es mir so hoffnungslos unlebendig, so ausser Kontakt mit aller lebendigen Erfahrung erscheinen liess?' (p.38)

In reply, Heinrich Vormweg points to the present-day uncertainty of differentiation between prose forms and goes on to say (p.42):

'Die Anwendung von Kunstmitteln, die eine Zuweisung zu Gattungen und deren untergeordneten Formen erlauben, hat zur Folge demnach Lebllosigkeit des Textes. Sind diese Kunstmittel vermieden, lässt sich erwarten, dass der Text einen gewissen Kontakt mit der lebendigen Erfahrung erreicht.'

It is perhaps unfortunate that Heissenbüttel in his comment does not name the story from which Lenz was reading, so that a better evaluation might have been made, but his expression of opinion is still valid, for there is no doubt, when a writer over-concentrates on style and artifice,

(1) Siegfried Lenz: Beziehungen; Hamburg, 1970, pp.287-297.

(2) Heissenbüttel/Vormweg: Briefwechsel über Literatur; Neuwied und Berlin, 1969.

the result is often mere artificiality which has little to do with reality, Vormweg's recommendation, that the author should concentrate on his material and leave the artifice, is basically sound advice.

We have already seen that Lenz can write well, that he can use dialogue, that he can avoid artificiality of construction. Any writer may attempt something new and fail, any writer may want to experiment - and where better to do so than at a meeting of the Gruppe 47, where he will hear immediate and ready criticism?

Contemporary with Lenz in his writing, although a year younger, Martin Walser in 1951 completed a dissertation on Franz Kafka,⁽¹⁾ whom he greatly admired. In 1955 Walser also brought out his first collection of stories in which he experiments in symbolism and the fusing of fantasy with realism, so that it seems inevitable that they should be regarded as early exercises in style for the author and that he himself should be shrugged off as a mere imitator of Kafka.

In reference to Walser such criticism would be unjustified. The early work of any writer is no less valid because it is his early work - indeed it is often his most sincere work, that most indicative of his own philosophy and attitude to the world around him, and also that from which his later work develops.

In Ein Flugzeug über dem Haus⁽²⁾ Walser attempts to pinpoint man's place in our contemporary world. We learn little or nothing about his characters, or what they think or feel. They are essentially there only

(1) Martin Walser: Versuch über die epische Dichtung Franz Kafkas: Beschreibung einer Form; München, 1951.

(2) Martin Walser: Ein Flugzeug über dem Haus; Frankfurt, 1955.

to illustrate whatever point Walser wants to make. Usually, his central characters are 'little' men - mechanics, clerks, porters - and the story is built round the profession of the central character. These professions are usually products of modern life, often in a small town, so that we view the great, evil and strange world through naive and frightened eyes.

With Böll, Walser shares a liking for first person narrative, and generally uses it well, as does Böll, giving a single point of view, and showing through the words and actions of the character, the philosophy and indeed the personality of the narrator himself.

A great deal of Walser's imagery is directly traceable to Kafka : the confrontation of the central character by some anonymous and terrifying higher authority, from which he cannot hope to escape is very reminiscent of Kafka's character being enmeshed by the vast, logical and inhuman 'System'. In Walser we find the impersonal and unfeeling authority appearing in the guise of the allerhöchste Geschäftsleitung, or das Wohnungsamt, or as ein unerbittlicher Amtsarzt.

Walser has on occasion been condemned as an anti-social Zeitkritiker, and it is true that his early stories express criticism, while his view of human activity often seems pessimistic, in that the system suppresses individual development to such an extent that the individual is ultimately destroyed or destroys himself. He is bound to succumb, because he lacks the predatory instinct - and Walser makes his own attitude quite clear : it is significant that the last sentence of "Ein Flugzeug über dem Haus" should be : 'Ich kann das nicht ändern.' This is typical of Walser himself.

He tries neither to interpret nor to explain. He records situations of human relationships as a psychological study, which he may examine in detail without having created one single character in any depth at all. His stories represent a constant search for identity in a society lacking in human compassion, a society in which the individual all too often is lost.

His satire, as for example in "Die letzte Matinee", is neither as sharp nor as witty as that of Böll, because he is only indirectly concerned with satiric purpose. In his switching from ordinary to extraordinary, from normality to abnormality, from the direct to the grotesquely oblique, he is much more akin to Kafka.

He introduces his characters to a life which is fraught with danger, a chancy, hazardous business full of sudden changes of attitude, each with its own menace - as in "Gefahrenvoller Aufenthalt". (p.17)

Doubt seems a constant factor in the minds of Walser's characters :

'Aber selbst wenn die Welt diese Kassierer nicht zur Verfügung hätte, so dachte ich, selbst dann möchte ich nicht als gelähmt erkannt werden.' ("Gefahrenvoller Aufenthalt")

Such a sentence is typical of Walser. His style is discursive, fluent and reasoned. He is above all the narrator, making little use of dialogue, but giving expression to the thoughts of his characters, and making frequent use of subjunctives and conditionals to imply possibilities, or possible dangers, or simply that things may not be as they seem.

Here again, in this lack of dialogue, he resembles Kafka. His narrative - unbroken by speech - takes on a somewhat oldfashioned appearance, but this in no way detracts from his ability, nor from his effectiveness. It gives instead an indication of the shape of his later work.

Another feature of his stories is the question of loss of identity and change of identity. Characters may become animals instead of human beings, or take on animal characteristics - e.g. the boys in "Ein Flugzeug über dem Haus" :

'und wenn er in diesem Augenblick mit der dazugehörigen Handbewegung gesagt hätte : "Platz, schön Platz!" wir hätten uns wie vom Tode errettete Hunde zu seinen Füßen gekuschelt.' (p.11)

Then in "Was wären wir ohne Belmonte", the unsuccessful pianists are likened also to dogs :

'Wahrscheinlich vermutet mancher, dass wir unsere federleichten Bewegungen einer besonderen Aufzucht verdanken, hält uns gar für eine kluge kluge Hunderasse. Tänzertiere. Hellohrig, feindrig und im Lautlosen geübt.' (p.80)

Lenz and Walser are alike in the manner of their development, and the way in which they arrived on the literary scene; they are both 'committed' writers; they are both in their own way critical of present-day society; and also, although developing from the Böll - Schnurre - Borchert era, they have both constantly gone further back in their reference, to Hemingway and to Kafka as their models, so for many reasons they make an interesting comparison.

Let us now take a story by each one of them and examine it in some detail : "Der Umzug" by Walser and "Ein Haus aus lauter Liebe" by Lenz.

Both of these stories seem to have a common basis. They both deal with social problems, and the social problem in each case is concerned with the effects of environment upon the individual. In each case too, there is a degree of humour in the portrayal of the characters concerned, and in the way in which they react to given situations.

The Walser story is the simpler of the two, the difference being

essentially in structure. The problem involved is that of the social climber, where the individual is at odds with the new social context in which he finds himself. The method of narration is to 'trace' the pattern of the problem by reference to the narrator's own experience as a case in point. The story is told in the first person.

The central figures are the narrator and his wife Gerda, who is the potential social climber. She is of a higher social class than her husband, delicate, unused to housework.....'ich sah, wie schmal ihre Hände waren'. (p.36) The narrator suspects that their differences may lead to difficulties for both of them, but she shrugs off his questions and anxieties about money matters : 'Sie hatte solche Fragen geradezu verboten und war beleidigt, wenn ich Überlegungen dieser Art anstellen wollte.' (p.36)

Yet she still aspires, she even goads him into rising from the work where he is happy as a mechanic.

'Ich machte Überstunden in der Werkstatt und begann abends an Erfindungen zu arbeiten, auf die die Menschheit nun nicht länger warten sollte. Um genau zu sein : es war Gerdas Wunsch, dass ich allabendlich über das mit Papier bespannte Bügelbrett hücken sollte, um Neues zu entwerfen.' (pp.36-37)

She wishes to impress her parents by claiming patents which he has perfected - the fact that the patents are for worthless inventions is irrelevant; she wishes to impress the neighbours by promoting him to the status of 'Ingenieur' on the nameplate on the door; she is herself impressed by the conversion of the ironing-board into a designer's drawing-board while of course his skill lies only with unaesthetic bits of wire and tin.

The man himself is the opposite of all this : good-natured, easy-going, a man 'der sich einiges Geschick in der Reparatur auch der zerstör-

testen Fahrräder erworben hat...' (p.46) and who asks for nothing more; who would rather whistle his way through life than find fault with it. Gerda is incapable of using her lips for anything so good-natured.

When therefore she confronts him with her dissatisfaction, his reaction is to produce, not his usual casual whistle, but the whine of an approaching shell. Hostilities have begun.

Obviously, Walser has made his two characters into 'test-cases' - their testing-ground being the new house into which they are suddenly projected. In a completely new context of living for them both, their own experience and their own possessions merely emphasise how unsuited they are to their new surroundings. Even their furniture is lost in the vastness of the rooms, and the sense of the narrator himself being lost is conveyed by the choice of words:

'.... so gross.... dass ich oft lange laufen und tasten musste, bis ich Gerda schmal vor einer der riesigen Wände fand.' (p.40)

Walser goes to considerable pains to 'clear' the narrator of blame, of accusations of non-cooperation, of criticising :

'Nun muss ich aber die Entwicklung der Dinge in aller Sorgfalt ausbreiten, wenn ich verstanden werden will. Und das will ich, denn inzwischen wurde begonnen, Schuld auf meine Schultern zu laden, die ich nicht tragen kann.' (pp.35-36)

The narrator is shown as the proverbial good neighbour, friendly, eager to understand the point of view of the residents, his overt activities on the balcony, his gentle gymnastics, his waving, all simply so that this
 'später bis zu einem wirklichen Händedruck könnte erweitert werden.'
 (p.41)

But he ends this activity with the cry:

'Wie sollte ich diese Nachbarn begreifen?'.... (p.42)

The structure of the story then is one of test-case characters, placed in the context of a test-grid situation; observation of reaction is carefully made and a critical conclusion reached. The whole story is a selected tracing of illustrative events in a logical sequence.

On the other hand the story by Siegfried Lenz, "Ein Haus aus lauter Liebe" is not an exploration of a series of events, out of which the conclusion emerges that such-and-such is wrong with society. Here, the story is the enactment of an occasion. The evening's baby-sitting is 'celebrated' in the way a poem celebrates a particular event.

For this scheme, Lenz takes the situation and sets out to dramatise, rather than to analyse it. Here is the kindly man : it is worth noting that he is portrayed as such all through the narrative : 'der Mann mit der gütigen Stimme'; '...er lächelte freundlich...'; 'ich erschauerte, aber ich wusste nicht wovor : sein Gesicht war freundlich, und er lächelte....'

He appears the epitome of concern for his family, anxious that they be well looked after, in good hands. He appears kind to the point of being neurotic :

'Er gab mir seine Hand, eine warme, fleischige Hand, und ich glaubte auch im sanften Druck dieser Hand seine Trauer über die Trennung zu verspüren, den inständigen Schmerz, der ihn jetzt schon ergriffen hatte. In seinem Gesicht zuckte es bis hinaus zu den Augen, zuckte durch sein trauriges Lächeln, durch die Gedunsenheit und Güte.' (p.59)

Then of course we find that the members of his family do not 'behave themselves'. His wife has turned away from him, carrying on an affair with another man, while the ex-matelot alcoholic, who is the man's father, has succeeded in 'going ashore' despite the son's restrictions. The man is left in a fool's paradise of believing, right to the end, that everything is as it

should be, and so we leave him bumbling about, reassured, exuding happiness and sighing in heartfelt joy.

The point being made is of course that the man, like Gerda, is the social climber. He has come up a long way. He now has his own factory. He is ashamed of his social shortcomings, just as she was. He looks up his own father, because he is ashamed of him and sees in him a potential social drawback. This is fully explained to us by the father himself :

'....Darum lassen sie mich nicht raus, Junge, darum haben sie mir Landverbot gegeben. Sie haben Angst, sie haben eine verfluchte Angst, dass mich jemand sehen könnte, und wenn sie Besuch haben, schieben sie mir eine Flasche rein...' (p.65)

The son has lost his humanity on the way up, just as Gerda had. His friendliness has no soul.....'von Ungeduld und Liebe gedrängt',^(p.66) his pathological concern for his dependent children has no real consideration for either his wife or his old father. He imposes impossible restrictions on them both, using the one for entertainment or self-advertisement, and imprisoning the other. As a result, both seek alternatives, both 'misbehave' - naturally enough.

Both stories then show the effect of social climbing upon the individual. The theme is essentially the same, and it is odd that the antecedents of the central figure should in each case be indicated by a description of the hands. In the case of Gerda : - 'ich sah, wie schmal ihre Hände waren,'; and in the Lenz story : 'Sein Handrücken war breit und behaart, ich sah es, als er mir die Hand auf den Arm legte.' (p.58)

The main difference of style and structure lies in the method of description or depiction. In the Walser story, the picture of the sterile, artificial world of the new house is achieved by heavily-documented, detailed description. The condition of existence is referred to as 'eine Krankheit',

'jene Lähmung', 'die allgemeine Erstarrung', a state of dishonesty. The author is at pains not merely to depict, but logically and systematically to document the sequence of development - the detailed descriptions of how neighbours are no longer interested in being neighbourly, or even courteous; of their insecurity, their fear of any movement, physical or social :

'Die hier mussten wahrscheinlich fürchten, in ein Häufchen weisslichen Mehls zusammenzufallen, wenn sie sich in einer allzu plötzlichen Regung ihrer wenigen Festigkeit beraubten.' (p.39)

They are by now automata, going through the routine movements of habitual existence; they are silent; the street seems frozen; the birds have gone, because the trees have gone; what life and growth remains seems a 'Zerrbild des Natürlichen' ... bringing sad memories of real woods and trees; and the people themselves by now almost petrified : 'Auf allen Balkons die gleichen ununterscheidbaren Gesichter aus Schlafgips und Totenkalk.'

The effect of all this on Gerda is traced equally meticulously, symptom by symptom.

In contrast to this method, Lenz gives us a scene, lightly-sketched, of a man whom he regards at once critically, with some amusement and with some sympathy. He documents nothing. We see only that all his people have turned away from him. We are given no details of his wife's unfaithfulness, only a hint of a more glamorous 'film' life, and the actual realisation of her infidelity is in the unexpected dialogue on the telephone.

Nor is the alcoholic father documented. We are not told how it all happened, stage by stage (as Walser might have given it to us, concerned as he is with motivation and behaviourism), any more than we are told exactly how the wife was first driven to turn away, what brought her to the decisive

step. We know only that the son had risen in the world, had become ashamed of his father, found him now an inconvenience and had refused him 'shore-leave'.

So in Lenz we have depiction by dramatisation, while in Walser we have development by documentation.

It is interesting also to compare the use made by each author of symbolism.

In Lenz the most striking example is where the baby-sitter, after stumbling on the evidence of the wife's infidelity, happens to glance up at the mantelpiece and sees how the firelight :

'.....lief über den grob geschnitzten Leidensmann und seine grob geschnitzten Jünger, die ausdrucksvoll in die Zeit lauschten mit herabhängenden, resignierten Händen.' (p.62)

At first one wonders why the symbol has been introduced at all, and in such detail, which seems so peripheral as to be superfluous. On consideration however we realise that it does place the man exactly. The symbol is introduced just after the discovery that the man has been betrayed by his wife, so here he is, deserted just as Christ was, standing alone. It is true, the love shown by Lenz's character is certainly not the quiet, placid love that Christ embodied, but it results nevertheless in his being deserted by his own, who have to resign themselves or adapt themselves to their situation - the wife with another man and the excitement of the film world, the father by the hope of occasional 'shore-leave', both in the meantime playing out their 'normal' existence with him as best they can.

This kind of imagery is quiet and unobtrusive, so much so that it could well be overlooked. It has the subtlety of the image in poetry.

Walser's symbolism on the other hand is heavily emphasised because

its purpose is not to suggest, but to underline, and this in turn stems from the different structure of the story. While Walser, with his admiration of Kafka's legal precision and documentary detail, examines his theme through a sequence of illustrative instances, in the manner of the novel rather than of the short story, Lenz employs the technique of presentation by a number of dramatic scenes.

And so it is that Walser has to end on the didactic note of instructing the child on the evils of social affectation : '....so werde ich ihr zu beweisen versuchen....' and finally : 'Alles andere ist, werde ich sagen, sündige und ungesunde Fassadenkletterei.....' (p.44)

Lenz on the other hand is content to allow his ending to fade out with the wry comment :

'Sie waren doch alle brav, meine Lieben?'
'Ja,' sagte ich, 'sie waren alle brav.' (p.67)

Another writer, in many ways similar to Lenz is Klaus Roehler, who writes powerfully on a wide range of topics in his collection Die Würde der Nacht.⁽¹⁾ In one story, called simply "Meine Taube", a boy lives with his aunt, who decides that the pigeons inhabiting the loft are such messy creatures that they must be destroyed. The boy catches them and puts them in a sack, while the aunt sharpens the axe with a certain relish.

In the woodshed by candlelight the slaughter takes place. The boy holds the victim in place, the aunt swings the axe. They come to the last pigeon, which the boy wants to keep, but the aunt, filled now with blood-lust, refuses to allow it. One more chop and all the pigeons are dead. The aunt tells the boy to take the block away. It is too heavy for him, so

(1) Klaus Roehler : Die Würde der Nacht, München, 1958.

she lays aside the axe and sets both arms about the block to lift it. The boy, seeing his aunt's head in suitable position, seizes the axe and swings

This story begins in the normality of the hungry years, when the killing of a few pigeons for food would be understandable, and while it remains on a footing of reality, the realism takes on the quality of a nightmare in the shed, lit by the flickering candles, casting grotesque shadows as the axe swings again and again

To the aunt Roehler brings the quality of any witch from German legend :

'Fühl mal!' sagte sie und hielt mir das Beil hin. Ich fasste es an und zuckte erschrocken zurück: 'es war sehr heiss. Tante Karolonie lachte. 'Sei nicht so zaghaft!' sagte sie. Sie nahm meinen Daumen und führte ihn ganz kurz und mit leichtem Druck über die Schneide. 'Au!' rief ich, und als ich den dicken Blutstropfen sah, der aus dem Finger quoll, stiegen mir Tränen in den Augen. 'Na, also!' sagte Tante Karolonie befriedigt. (p.126)

Or again :

'Tante Karolonie wurde bald ungeduldig, wenn das Ausbluten länger dauerte, oder wenn es mir nicht sofort gelang, einen Kopf schlaggerecht auf den Klotz zu legen.' (p.35)

Roehler uses plain, factual language : (p.131)

'es ist ja bekannt, dass verschiedene Vögel auch ohne Kopf noch ein Stück fliegen wollen....' 'Ich öffnete den Sack und nahm die erste Taube heraus. Sie zitterte und war ganz nass. Ich streichelte sie und legte ihren Kopf auf den Hackklotz.....' (p.35)

The quality of nightmare is vividly portrayed :

'Unsere Schatten huschten über die Wände, schnellten zur Decke hinauf, wurden unter der Decke geknickt und hingen (p.134) schwarz über uns. Es roch nach schmelzendem Wachs und nach Harz.... der klappende Schlag des Beils aufs Holz übertönte in unseren Ohren das leise Knirschen der brech- (p.136) enden Wirbelknochen..... es roch nach Blut.'

Finally, in the moonlight :

'Es war eine klare, helle Nacht. Ich freute mich auf den Augenblick, in welchem sich der Mond in den blanken Flächen meines Beils spiegeln würde....' (p.139)

Candlelight, shadows, blood, then moonlight.

Roehler writes with vigour and zest. His imagination ranges freely and widely, nor is he afraid to face up to problems both past and present. In his collection Die Würde der Nacht⁽¹⁾ he has one story typical of the Kahlschlag period, entitled "Der Held", of a country boy at the end of the war. He has been brought up on Nazi ideology - Kein Opfer ist zu gross dem Schicksal deines Volkes die Zukunft zu gewinnen - Enemy tanks are nearing the farm. People prepare themselves for surrender. The boy takes his father's pistol and spare magazines when he goes to rub down the horses. A cold wind blows all the way from Russia. The tanks arrive, the boy hides. The tank turret opens and two soldiers get out, calling the people towards them. One soldier addresses them. The boy takes out his pistol - Auf unseren Fahnen steht der Endsieg - and shoots the man in the back. The tanks open fire : everybody is shot down, everything is destroyed. The boy fires his last shots, the tank turret swings towards him. The story ends : 'Der Junge lag im Graben. Er sah aus wie der Himmel. Himbeerrote Fäden liefen unter den Haaren hervor über sein Gesicht'. (p.21)

A common enough period piece, whose tragedy lay in the fact that it was the boy, by his blind adherence to the slogans of the time, who brought disaster on them all.

Another story in this same collection is the title-story, "Die Würde

(1) Klaus Roehler : Die Würde der Nacht, München, 1958. pp.12-21).

der Nacht", which presents the growing problem of colour and colour-prejudice. (pp.22-48)

The scene is set in a German university, the characters are students. Nicholas, a negro, is friendly with Susy, a white girl. She is confident that the platonic quality of their relationship is sufficient safeguard against talk, and so she dismisses any doubts that he may have about their being seen together. But the eyes of others, doubting, wondering, lusting, loathing are upon them. One of them decides to 'teach her a lesson' and rapes Susy. Her girl-friends persuade her to avoid the negro. She is 'out' when he calls. Later, in a meeting between them, she points out that she 'has a lot of work to do', she is 'busy'. Yet she agrees finally to go with him that evening to a film. He is to wait for her in the hall. When he does, she eventually comes down with the others, greets him and goes on....

In Germany, the colour problem is comparatively new, although it does appear in Wolfgang Koeppen's novel Tauben im Gras, (1951), and while Roehler does not attempt to resolve it in this story, he does set his reader firmly amid the complexity of the whole question. The 'open' ending, with the lights of the buildings going out, so that the dark skin of the negro merges into the darkness of the night, leaving him an indeterminate shadow, is splendidly symbolic. He is there, but we need not see him. Tomorrow's light is another day.

The separate scenes and separate dialogues of the narrative give the effect of the gossiping people around the two central characters, who are then forced apart, away from their early ideals. Roehler opens with a quotation - in English - which finishes with the words : 'Reflect....

there is more dignity in being homeless tonight.'

The story ends with Nicholas cast out, friendless - and homeless.

These last three writers, Lenz, Walser and Roehler between them, without having any apparent unity of aim or technique, serve effectively to illustrate how extensively the short story of the 1950's has developed in range and theme since the start of the decade, in the Kahlschlag period. Roehler indeed, as we have seen in one collection, spans the range himself, from "Der Held" to "Die Würde der Nacht".

The impact made immediately after the war by short story writers caused other writers to study the patterns of success. This brought a greater understanding of the techniques of the short story, and an increasing awareness of the value of individual words, especially of adjectives, which the short story writer must choose for their power of implication and not simply of description.

The result has been an apparent simplification of the structure of the sentence itself, so that the meaningful adjective or phrase can have greater effect. In the good writer, this has brought increased readability, in the bad, mere banality. But the bad writer will not survive, while the good will write more.

After the Kahlschlag period, the essential simplicity of style remained, but the complete freedom of theme enjoyed during the 1950's encouraged writers to branch out more and more. Increasing stability of society, the increase of affluence, the increase of travel and the widening of interests at all levels of society, while bringing problems in their wake, also widened horizons for the potential writer and his readers.

The development of the short story in Germany since the war does not stem from any one particular writer. It has emerged rather from the work and from the experiments of many authors, differing in age, character and concept. For the period of the 1950's alone, we have made reference to at least fifteen authors who have had collections of their own stories published during that time, and some of these have had two or three collections to their name, while obviously there are others not quoted in this selective research.

This must surely show to what extent the short story has gained ground and how firmly it has become established in Germany since the war, because the short story as such is less popular with the average reader than the novel, simply because it makes more demands on him. The short story depends for its effect not only on the skill of the writer but also on the chords it strikes within the experience or the sensitivity of the reader. It is like poetry in that the reader's pleasure depends largely upon something within himself which responds to the written word.

Changes in society and social attitudes - the new morality, the permissive society, the age of violence allied to affluence - have been reflected in changing themes in the short story as elsewhere, while developments of style and techniques of writing have derived from changes in the intentions and attitudes of the writer himself.

Thus the simplicity of the Kahlschlag, which for many may have meant merely a stripping away of excess verbiage, has now given way to a simplicity of expression whose purpose is sincerity. This may be the apparent sincerity of artistry - as we saw in Bret Harte - or it may be that of

the reformer, of the man of conviction. The eradication of social distinctions in the expanding society in Germany during the 1950's may be partly responsible for it, but whatever the cause, the result has been a more realistic, more purposeful style of prose writing, especially in the short story.

We must however bear in mind that the development of short story technique in Germany has been part of a much wider movement throughout the whole of creative writing. New media have demanded new techniques and the development of these techniques has then been extended to the traditional forms of writing, among them the short story. The visual demands of television for example have led to a greater awareness of visual imagery, which conversely has made superfluous much that was previously accepted as an integral part of the writer's technique.

In any country other than Germany an interesting comparison can be made between the writing of the 1950's and that of the pre-war decade, but such a comparison for German writing would in no way be valid, and to go further back to the 1920's, the First World War and the decade prior to that has, for the short story, little purpose.

That is why for many, the short story in Germany is a postwar phenomenon and something entirely new.

CHAPTER 5 : THE 1960's.

A) RECENT TRENDS.

In later years the decade of the 1950's, which we have just examined, may well be regarded as the years crucial to the development of the short story in German literature, because not only did the form of the short story which is already becoming 'traditional' become established then, to be accepted as the pattern for future short stories, but there began also the secondary development, that of experimental writing, which began with the return by Schnurre and Heckmann to parable forms.

These first experiments, interesting in themselves, also helped to create an awareness of the potential which lies in the manner of writing, as a means of conveying an impression of human behaviour or of human philosophy. And so it is, in the 1960's, that we find this secondary development of the 1950's being taken up by new writers to give expression to theories which, in the literature of the world, are a very modern postwar development.

Where Schnurre and Heckmann in the 1950's turned to the parable form of Aesop to convey their moralistic lesson and to show that something in society is wrong, Reinhard Lettau ⁽¹⁾ now presents his character, Manig, in the complexities of whose behaviour we are led to comprehend something of the different levels of experience without finding them contradictory. Lettau's whole concept here is closely akin to Yeats's idea of the masks of man - man being simply the mask that he wears for the occasion - and his definition will vary with each viewer. Here he comes close to Lawrence Durrell's literary application of Einstein's theory of relativity as stated implicitly and ex-

(1) Reinhard Lettau : Auftritt Manigs; München, 1963.

plicitly in the Alexandrian Quartet: there is no truth, there is no personality, there is no absolute - all things are relative. Fundamentally existentialist writers like Beckett, Pinter, Sartre and Faulkner are all similarly concerned with the conflict between 'relative' and 'absolute', which they have expressed, each one in his own way.

In the opening passage of his book, which significantly enough is dedicated to Jürgen Becker, and contains some 56 short passages, Lettau introduces us to his character in "Auftritt Manigs", thus:

"Ein Herr in voller Ausrüstung betritt das Zimmer. Er lüftet den Hut, und schon hat er sich wesentlich verändert. Nun streift er die Handschuhe ab: zuerst zupft er mit der noch bekleideten Rechten an den Fingerspitzen der linken Hand, ganz schnell, fünf Mal, dann desgleichen auf der anderen Seite. Die Handschuhe klatschen zu Boden, der Herr hebt die Hände: wieder ein Stück weiter in eine andere Richtung. Nun tritt er ein Schritchen vor, streift geschwind den Mantel von den Schultern, wirft ihn sich dann über den Kopf, zieht ihn vorn provisorisch zusammen. Nur ein Auge späht ins Zimmer: Spion im Salon, im Dickicht, beim Eisengitter, draussen, vor der Villa, im Busch, jedenfalls wieder ein anderer Herr. Er gibt den Mantel auf, und man erschrickt über die Neuerung. Die Sonne tritt ins Zimmer, der Herr nutzt es aus und erscheint in Beleuchtung. Da das Fenster das Licht quadratisch sammelt, ist ein Scheinwerfereffekt entstanden. Zweidimensional springt der Herr ans Fenster, ein Scherenschnitt zum Zusammenlegen. Man könnte ihn jetzt schnell fangen, auf Papier kleben, einrahmen, über den Kamin hängen. Aber da die Sonne verschwindet, rundet sich der Herr wieder ins Zimmer hinein, gewinnt an Tiefe, man könnte ihn nun wieder kneifen, er überzeugt wieder. Als er nun eine Flöte hervorholt, sich mit übereinandergeschlagenen Beinen in der Nische niederlässt und von dort, mit tanzenden Fingern, Melodien hervorschickt, da ist es ein ganz anderer Herr. Vor uns sitzt Manig." (p.7)

Here in the first passage Lettau clearly demonstrates for us the concept of the masks of man, in a piece very similar to William Golding in Free Fall (where man has a choice of hats instead of masks), and we are shown the changing faces of the individual, the changing attitudes, the differing ex-

terior. We see how he can make use of his surroundings to achieve his purpose, to suit his own ends, and with each chameleon-like change his personality changes too, so that he fits into his background. It introduces Manig, whose very name shows something of the many-sidedness of his being.

One other short example will serve our purpose here, the piece entitled "Austausch":

"Hier, mein Hemd," sagt der Herr, er zieht sein Hemd aus, hält es Manig hin, Manig nimmt es, zieht sein Hemd aus, hält es dem Herrn hin, der das Hemd anzieht, wonach ein Herr auf ihn zutritt, ihm sein Hemd anbietet, das Manig annimmt, nachdem er sein Hemd wieder ausgezogen und dem Herrn gegeben hat, der es nicht erst anzieht, sondern einem Herrn hinhält, der es gegen eines eintauscht, das er gegen eines getauscht hat, das er gegen eines getauscht hat, so dass, wie man jetzt bemerkt, auf dem weiten Platz hier, überall, auf Brunnenrändern, bei der Promenade, im Rund von Treppen, auf der Parkbank, neben dem Laden Herren Hemden an- und ausziehen, die ihnen angeboten werden, allgemeiner Austausch. (p.47)

This short piece gives us a scrutiny of human activity in all its complexity, showing the continual and continuing day-to-day exchanges between one human being and another. The structure of the exchange is given allegorical significance and definition in terms of what is exchanged. There is the symbolism of the shirt. Why not a hat? Or a coat? The shirt is firstly something close, almost a part of the individual, neither a hat nor a coat would have the same effect. Some in the crowd would be without hats, none are without shirts. It is as though each individual is giving something of himself in each exchange, and each human being is therefore in some way modified by his contact and his relationship with the rest in a constantly moving, constantly changing world, restlessly expressed in one sentence by Lettau, who does not however allow it to become clear whether the changes and the movement are for good or ill. The restlessness mounts -

think of the effect of speeding-up a silent movie - into a gigantic kaleidoscope, in which none can tell why the changes are going on, but everybody is madly involved. It can become futile, or comic.

The effect of this kind of writing is completely subjective. It depends on the participation and the sensibility of the reader, and even in the same reader may vary with his mood on different readings. The writer does not attempt to point out a moral or to instruct, he does not take up a standpoint at all, but he so presents his scene that each different reader will draw something from it. What he draws depends on his own viewpoint, and that is not the concern of the writer. This is reminiscent of T.S. Eliot in his essay on "The metaphysical poets" (Selected Essays; London, 1966 edition, pp.281ff), where he refers to the 'unification of sensibility', and just as Lettau's characters are presented as being 'relative' to the context against which we see them, so the effect of his presentation will also be relative, this time to the reader's own sensibility.

Lettau's prose pieces here - which certainly cannot be regarded as short stories - are interesting as a contrast to or possible development from the parable forms of the 1950's. For the average reader, they are probably more interesting than for example the discontinuous prose of Jürgen Becker, who uses a certain element of poetic fantasy in order to create an impression. Consider the following, from his Felder:⁽¹⁾

"als belasteter und nunmehr in die Klärung des Rechts bei solch täglich vorfallendem Unfall einbezogener Zeuge: in der spontanen Korrespondenz mit der zuständigen Zentrale über den mündlichen Weg einer Sprechmuschel und eines Drahts; in der pflichtmässigen Erwartung der Ankunft des amtlichen Fahrzeugs zum Dienst der

(1) Jürgen Becker: Felder, Frankfurt, 1964, p.25.

allgemeinen Passanten bei Tag und bei Nacht: als den gegebenen Vorgang exakt reproduzierende und dem aufnehmenden Protokoll dienliche Persönlichkeit?"

Or again :

"da war viel drin in meinem Kopf. da rollte es rum. Gemurmel von hinteren Ränken gedeckt entdeckt zur Rede an die Wand gestellt und weg. Da scheuerte es und riss. nein. riss nicht. nein. da blieb es liegen. wo. ganz unten im Gescheibe unter dem Scharren und Schaufeln oben drauf gegeben drauf. drauf geschlagen drauf die Nummer das Schild und weg. da ging viel rein.

Becker goes on to the following: (p.27)

"da lag es drin in meinem Kopf.
was machte es.
das.
wie kam es dazu.
es kam dazu.
wann fing es an.
das fing so an.
warum war es drin.
es war drin.
was.
es.
sonst nichts.
sonst es."

This kind of thing is maintained for possibly three pages. It is an extreme form, drastically so, in its apparent lack of recognisable shape, of structure, even of recognisable meaning, but it is not without its place and not without its value. The fact that Becker is not by any means an isolated figure in his experiment - Arno Schmidt, Konrad Bayer, Helmut Heissenbüttel in Germany, LeRoi Jones, Hubert Selby Jr., Paul Metcalf, John Rechy in America - is an indication of how widespread is the uncertainty of our times, even if Becker is an extreme example of experimental writing, which is generally the work of the young and reflects the restlessness of that generation throughout the whole world.

Vacillation, the search for identity, for faith, for security, for happiness without knowing what happiness is, fear of war, fear of the future, fear of death : in the fundamental revaluation of human beliefs appearing not only in Germany since the war, these are among the characteristics of youth. The 'sick' literature which has appeared in the last decade on both sides of the Atlantic is one expression of youth's uncertainty, and experimental forms such as Becker's are another. His work is difficult to read and to understand in its grotesqueness, its contrasting and merging of meaningful and meaningless, of beautiful and ugly, of noble and ignoble, yet it is neither nihilistic nor insignificant. It may be bewildered, but it too is searching for identity.

The same trends are apparent in drama on the stage, the radio and television, where writers of the calibre of Dürrenmatt and Grass are just as extreme, both in their criticism of modern society and in their grotesque presentation of their stage pieces. We need only think of the ironic contrasts of Dürrenmatt's Die Ehe des Herrn Mississippi, think of the asylum setting of Die Physiker, then consider the violent and grotesque imagery of Günter Grass in such pieces as his Onkel, Onkel, where a young man, bent on murder, is himself finally shot dead by two children who have stolen his pistol.

The fantasy of Hildesheimer in parable plays such as Spiele in denen es dunkel wird is gentler, more tolerant while less extreme and certainly more comprehensible to the reader - and possibly therefore more far-reaching in effect - are the 'grotesque' stories of Heinz Heckmann, Siegfried Lenz and Heinrich Böll. These are comparable in vigour and style to James Purdy,

Tennessee Williams or Shirley Jackson in America in their presentation of a world of sharp and often frightening paradox. The best of their stories are universal in truth, imagery and enigma, stories which show an awareness of the significance of human experience and behaviour, even on the brink of possible annihilation.

It is interesting that in the same year as Becker's Felder, Heinrich Böll should bring out Entfernung von der Truppe.⁽¹⁾ Although this is described as an Erzählung, it is about 20,000 words in length and is different in form from any of Böll's preceding stories. The scene is set mainly in wartime and is a first-person account of a man who marries and then does not return to his unit. He is arrested. His wife is later killed in an air-raid, his friend in the army is also killed, and he retires behind a mask of cynicism and indifference and shuts himself off from the world.

Important here is the manner of writing: there is no real thread of straightforward narrative; there is no closely-knit short story structure; there is no meaningful dialogue. In view of our consideration of Lettau's Auftritt Manigg however it is interesting to see how Böll so casts his narrative here that the effect will to a great extent be subjective. The story unfolded by the first-person character tells enough in scenes to stimulate the imagination of his reader. As he says himself:

"Mag jeder damit oder draus machen, was er will....Vergrössert oder verkleinert: das Material, das ich biete, ist echt; was einer damit anfängt, geht mich nichts an." (p.98)

Here Böll does by conscious invitation what Lettau does by kaleidoscopic presentation. The author himself draws back, so that he himself is

(1) Heinrich Böll: Entfernung von der Truppe; Köln/Berlin, 1964.

now 'entfernt von der Truppe' and cannot simply be the servant of the reader.

The only impression that the reader has of the writer is one of pessimism and cynicism, which he several times expresses:

'Seine Befürchtung, es ginge "abwärts", schreckt mich nicht.
Wohin sonst sollte es gehen?' (p.78)

And again: 'Was soll mir der Kaffeehandel, wo ich Teetrinker bin?' (p.78)

And also: 'Es ist bitter genug, Torheiten zu begehen, noch bitterer aber sind vergebliche Torheiten.' (p.89).

For perhaps the first time in a story by Böll, the impression left with the reader is one of pessimism and personal despondency. The message of the piece seems to be expressed by the moral set out on p.138 :

'Es wird dringend zur Entfernung von der Truppe geraten.
Zur Fahnenflucht und Desertation wird eher zu- als von ihr
abgeraten, ich sagte ja schon: es gibt Idioten, die nicht
nur zielen, auch treffen, und jeder muss wissen, was er
riskiert. Schusswaffen sind völlig humorlose Instrumente.'

This philosophy of 'opting-out' is so foreign to Böll's character as it has previously been revealed, that we must consider whether or not he has done it intentionally. In the course of the story, Böll does not commit himself as directly as he has done in the past in showing his own standpoint, and the reader is allowed enough scope to feel for himself although the presentation is not quite in the manner of Lettau; but has he here invented a character from whose embittered cynicism each reader can, to a greater or lesser degree draw his own conclusion about present-day society as a whole? This would appear to be his aim, but the impression he leaves with the reader is rather one of his own personal disillusionment.

This particular Erzählung is important because it could indicate a shifting of emphasis on the part of Böll in regard to his own personal involvement in writing. He has never shown any deviation before, and it remains

to be seen whether he does it again, but by doing it here, he has at least placed himself alongside those authors who are experimenting with a variety of shorter prose forms in order to achieve possibly greater subtlety of influence.

The desire for experiment does not restrict itself to the form of presentation. Among the new writers now appearing, Ingeborg Bachmann is interesting, because she uses the traditional form of the short story as the vehicle for expressing in prose what is fundamentally a lyric ideal. Already a lyric poet of standing, the whole range of her prose work is more lyrical and much more extensive than that of either Elisabeth Langgässer or Ilse Aichinger, perhaps because her own life has been more secluded. She deals with humanity and the moral and philosophical problems of mankind as a whole, while Langgässer and Aichinger are both concerned with the problems of individual human beings within the society of their time.

In her collection Das dreissigste Jahr⁽¹⁾ which she describes as Erzählungen, Ingeborg Bachmann turns to problems which have exercised the mind of man since the days of Greek tragedy. This gives her plenty of scope for lyric expression, which she uses to present her characters as troubled, hesitant figures, at times darkly brooding, swayed first one way then the other by instinctive and emotional reaction. She contrasts the outside world, with its conventional morality, its rules and its corruption, where life is indicated as being oppressive and in some way restricting, with on the other hand the lonely, tormented individual, sensitive and highly emotional, possibly of noble purpose but of despairing mind.

(1) Ingeborg Bachmann: Das dreissigste Jahr; München, 1960.

In all of her characters there is a strange merging of identity, until one wonders if the stories are to some degree at least autobiographical. Certainly the feelings and emotions expressed seem to be interchangeable and all contain a certain ingenuous femininity. All are vacillating and hesitant, all long that 'die Welt sich verändert', but none gives any indication as to how it might change, or in what direction.

Typical perhaps is the hero of the title story, "Das dressigste Jahr" :

'Wie alle Geschöpfe kommt er zu keinem Ergebnis. Er möchte nicht leben wie irgendeiner und nicht wie ein Besonderer. Er möchte mit der Zeit gehen und gegen sie stehen..... Er duldet und duldet nicht. Hasst und hasst nicht. Kann nicht dulden und kann nicht hassen.' (p.71)

It is interesting to compare that with Gerd Gaiser:

'Wir wussten noch nicht, wie wir hinauskommen würden und dorthin, wo wir zuhause waren. Herübergefahren, die Rückkehr ungewiss. Heraufgestiegen, und nichts angetroffen. Gesucht und nicht gefunden.' (Am Pass Nascondo, p.84-5).

Much of Ingeborg Bachmann's work, like that of Gaiser, could be described as 'meditativ-lyrisch'. Certainly she brings to her work the same lyric approach as Gaiser does to his, but where Gaiser uses a succession of adjectives as stepping-stones to an association of ideas, Bachmann uses nouns to define or to limit an otherwise abstract concept, e.g. '... er weiss, wie die Welt ist, ein Geschäft, ein Handel, ein Witz, eine Schweinerei...' (p.62) Or again : '...neue Kinder einer alten Freundin, Berufswechsel, Korruption, Skandale, Premiere, Liebschaften, Geschäft.' (p.59)

In "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha", where the subject is the troubled anxiety of the mind, the action, such as it is, takes place during the dead hours of the night, after the last guests have gone ... all but one.

'Es war zum Greifen nah gewesen, für Augenblicke sogar dagesen: Ekstase, Rausch, Tiefe, Auslieferung, Genuss. Danach hatte sie sich wieder geeinigt mit dem Mann auf Güte, Verliebtheit, Wohlwollen, Fürsorge, Anlehnung, Sicherheit, Schutz, Treue, allerlei Achtenswertes.' (1)

The use of these nouns in an apparently random scattering has the almost paradoxical effect of bringing greater definition to her ideas, and the choice has been carefully made to convey the desired associations in the mind.

There is, in Bachmann, a constant yearning for something which is somehow unattainable, a seeking for the ultimate, the absolute, in a kind of lyric ideal of youth like the Blaue Blume of a previous age. Nowhere do we learn why her characters should find life so oppressive and unbearable, and she has been criticised, as indeed has Gaiser, because the composition of her stories is too loose, and it is true that her pieces lack the structural cohesion and purpose to achieve Poe's 'pre-determined effect'. There are many writers in Germany who have a much greater technical command of the short story than does Ingeborg Bachmann, and who therefore write very much better short stories, but it is perhaps wrong to judge her effort by the standards and conditions so set. She has tried to convert to prose expression what has previously been accepted as a lyric concept, and the experiment she makes is in itself a considerable achievement. It is interesting that it should appear in the same year as Gerd Gaiser's Am Pass Nascondio, with which it has so much in common.

Writing now, at the end of the 1960's, it is not possible to examine in proper perspective all that has appeared in the five years immediately prior to this research, but developments as we have seen, are already taking place,

(1) Ingeborg Bachmann: Das dreissigste Jahr, München, 1960, p.170.

and so we have considered some of the experimental writing of the 1960's in detail because it is of importance in reflecting aspects of modern thought.

It would however be quite wrong to claim or to assume that this experimental writing is the main stream of creative writing in the present decade. Where it once was difficult to find even a scattering of writers associated with the short story in Germany, now there are comparatively few who are not. The short story writer of today is not a writer of the merely trivial, but a serious craftsman applying himself assiduously to his task, and those who became established in the 1950's obviously continued to write in the 1960's.

Of the writers whom we have already considered, Heinrich Böll produced a collection of short stories in 1962 entitled Als der Krieg ausbrach. Als der Krieg zu Ende war. Then came his novel Ansichten eines Clowns, which he followed by Entfernung von der Truppe in 1964; Wolfdietrich Schnurre covers a wide range of themes against a variety of backgrounds in his two collections Funke im Reisig (1963) and Ohne Einsatz kein Spiel (1964) whose stories deal with aspects of modern life in Germany; Gerd Gaiser followed up his Am Pass Nascondo (1960) with Gazelle, grün (1965); Siegfried Lenz brought out in 1964 his Lehmans Erzählungen oder so schön war mein Markt, the reminiscences of a black-marketeer, which he followed in 1965 with Der Spielverderber, a collection similar in style and outlook to his Jäger des Spotts; Martin Walser's Lügengeschichten appeared in 1964, and Ilse Aichinger wrote a series of dialogues called Wo ich wohne (1963), then a collection Eliza, Eliza (1965), of lyric pieces and dialogues in which metaphor and symbolism interchange with reality.

These are the writers who have probably made the greatest contribution to the development of the short story in Germany during the 1950's, and who

represent the main stream of short story writing still, but they are by no means the only well-known writers of short stories. There are many established authors, such as Hans Bender, Herbert Eisenreich, Heinz Albers, Hans Erich Nossack, Marie Luise Kaschnitz, Anna Seghers and Wolfgang Weyrauch, who are all capable writers of professional ability and standing who have brought out collections of short stories in the early 1960's and are thereby helping to maintain and further the form of the short story as it has become established in the 1950's.

New currents and possible new strength may be added by such writers as Ingeborg Bachmann, Gabriele Wohmann, Hans Lipinsky-Gottersdorf, Reinhard Lettau, Tadeuss Nowakowski, Manfred Bieler, Jürgen Becker, Helmut Heissenbüttel, Arno Schmidt, Christoph Meckel, Günter Kunert and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, but new and interesting writers are now appearing on every hand. Characteristic of the newer writers seems to be that they do not restrict themselves to one form. Many write for radio, for the stage, for television, as well as for purely literary effect, so that the different disciplines and techniques thus imposed on the author must serve to develop his talent in whatever field appeals to him.

The short story has by now become an integral and important component of literary activity in Germany. For the writer it offers immense scope and unlimited freedom for the play of his imagination, yet it demands such a high degree of discipline and of technical skill that most writers would agree that it is very much easier to write an average novel than a good short story. It is therefore to the question of form and technique that we now turn.

B) MODERN FORM AND TECHNIQUES: GERMAN VIEWS.

One of the features of the modern literary scene in Germany is the readiness of the present-day writer not only to experiment with new forms and new problems in writing, in the short story and elsewhere, but also to express his views on the short story in general and to discuss the techniques of writing it.

A claim might be made that this is due in part at least to the efforts of the Gruppe 47, whose purpose, as we have seen, was to promote by discussion; but whatever the cause, it represents a fundamental change of attitude from that of the past, where only the critics seemed to give utterance in print, and their views on what should or should not be written, and also on how it should or should not be written, were in accordance with precepts and requirements established not by the writers as they wrote, but by those same critics as they criticised.

It is a very different situation now. Of the modern short story writers we have already considered, a good half-dozen at least have either lectured or written on the short story and its problems of technique and theme, so that the points they make, added to those of such critics as Doderer, Motekat, Kilchenmann, Zierott and Skorna make a fairly comprehensive commentary, which we might conveniently group under the following headings:

- a) the short story in general: comments of Heissenbüttel, Kilchenmann and Kusenber.
- b) Types and classification of short story.
- c) Form and technique: 1. Openings and endings,
2. Presentation and development,
3. Dialogue.

Helmut Heissenbüttel in Über Literatur⁽¹⁾ gives his theory of narration, in

(1) Helmut Heissenbüttel: Über Literatur; Olten/Freiburg, 1966, p.172.

which the subject-matter gains its literary significance, its fascination for the reader, from the unexpected or unusual angle selected by the narrator, and also from the sociological and topographical information contained in the course of the narration.

The reader here no longer has to identify himself with the central character, but feels closer to the experience or to the situation portrayed. No new horizon is necessarily opened up, no boundaries extended. The factual material given by the story serves only to refer the reader back to his own known experience.

Heissenbüttel points to the use made of the fable or parable, quoting Lessing, Heinrich von Kleist and Johann Peter Hebel, all three of whom are in the didactic tradition. Here the essential lies in the transformation of the didactic, moralistic or philosophical element into narrative at all - as indeed we saw when examining the modern parables of Schnurre and Heckmann in the 1950's.

Heissenbüttel goes on to state that the deeper the psychological involvement, the closer we are to the grotesque, the fantastic or the satiric conception of narrative, and he traces a direct linkage from Ludwig Tieck and E.T.A. Hoffmann to Edgar Allan Poe, Gogol and Hermann Melville and from Georg Büchner to Ambrose Bierce and Saki, maintaining that the element of fantasy lies not in any form of monstrosity but in the obscure and enigmatic, because a story is allied to sociology, psychoanalysis and the study of all social phenomena, which again is of interest when we recall the parables of the 1950's.

It is of course true that imaginative writing can bring to light a wider and more encompassing truth than can literal fact. This is why authors through the ages have turned to fantasy to explore the truth behind fact - we

think of the 'Rocking-horse Winner' by D.H. Lawrence, in which there is only one fantastic assumption, namely that man, by putting himself in a trance by means which exhaust his physical and conscious powers, may achieve psychic powers of intuition which enable him to predict the outcome of future events.

Professor Ruth Kilchenmann,⁽¹⁾ who studied in America, makes the point (p.11) that because the technique of short story writing is taught and studied in most American colleges, the short story itself tends now to hold a place in esteem which is lower in America than in Germany, where (she maintains) it is still regarded as literature, implying perhaps that it now occupies the place formerly held by the Novelle. While however the status of the short story may have sagged a little in America, the short story in Germany has only comparatively recently achieved recognition as literature at all, so the claim that it is 'still regarded as literature' is probably premature.

Professor Kilchenmann sets out the aim of her book as that of 'einer gültigen Beschreibung und strukturellen Bestimmung' (p.13) and she is careful to avoid any limiting or restrictive definition of the short story as such. She traces the development through the 19th century, showing it to be the outcome of a gradual but continuous breakdown of the traditional narrative fiction in its shorter form, and sees it emerge slowly from a number of overlapping forms, which she calls 'Mischformen'. These she shows to be works in prose which may have characteristics of the Novelle or of the Erzählung as well as of the short story, and she concludes by maintaining that this process of emerging is not yet complete as a process of development, but is still going on.

(1) Ruth J. Kilchenmann: Die Kurzgeschichte; Stuttgart, 1967.

Obviously, any examination of the requirements of the short story leads to a classification of different kinds of story, because each kind of story will inevitably have different requirements. Such a classification could lead again to difficulties of definition, which in the case of the short story at least, Professor Kilchenmann has avoided. She has been characteristically neat in some of her other definitions, although she is a little unconvincing perhaps when she says of the Anekdote: "Die örtliche und zeitliche Bestimmtheit, die plastische Charakterisierung und der Schluss mit einer Pointe oder einem Witzwort unterscheidet sie klar von der Kurzgeschichte." (p.17).

In regard to the Erzählung, Professor Kilchenmann is of the opinion that the narrator is closer to the reader than he is in the Novelle, and because he is more relaxed, it is clearer in the Erzählung that something is in fact being related. The Erzählung shares with the Novelle a psychologically explicable sequence of events, but in the case of the Novelle all the elements in this sequence run towards a climax where the conflict is resolved more gradually. In both forms the conclusion is a closed ending.

From her discussion of the forms of the Novelle and the Erzählung, her view of the short story itself gradually comes to light, because she finds three essentials which give it its distinctive character. Firstly, she says (p.18) that the governing principle of the short story must be Darstellung durch Handlung, and she goes so far as to say that this must be the Grundstrukturprinzip der Kurzgeschichte, that the writer of short stories must allow his material to speak for itself, without interpolation and without explanation by the author.

This is of course the essence of dramatic principle, and is one main

reason why so many short stories seem 'dramatic' in effect, and indeed so often lend themselves so readily to stage or dramatic production. It is a point which is also made by Heinrich Böll, who refers to:

'....die Gattung Kurzgeschichte, die nicht mit novellistischen Höhepunkten und der Erläuterung moralischer Wahrheiten erzählt, sondern erzählt, indem sie darstellt.' (1)

For Professor Kilchenmann, the second essential of the short story is that it should contain no explanation of its content - the reader must be directed by what is implicit in the story or by what is suggested by it.

Then, on p.19, she gives her third essential:

'....In der Kurzgeschichte..... entsteht die Spannung zwischen der alltäglichen äusserlichen und der dahinterstehenden eigentlichen, entscheidenden Wirklichkeit, und nicht aus Ereignis, Begebenheit oder Fabel.'

This emphasis on the hidden truth, the hidden reality, and the implication that things are seldom what they seem, compensates for any loss of tension brought about by the absence of a direct sequence towards a climax, because she maintains that unity in the short story depends less on the connected structure of the plot itself than on the coherence of the writer's vision which is shown within the form. She points to the lack of a logical sequence, which often occurs in the short story (p.36), but says that elements which are apparently quite disconnected can be made to exert an influence upon one another within the framework of the story. No action in the shape of an unfolding plot is necessary, and in fact any event which does occur in the short story is not in itself a central or a focal point of the story, but simply a stepping-stone for the author's expression. The crisis of the story is rarely reached as the result of a sequence of events as happens in the Novelle, and indeed the action

(1) Heinrich Böll: Erzählungen, Hörspiele, Aufsätze; Köln, 1961, pp.364-5.

of the short story often begins at a point which would be after the ending of the Novelle.

On page 17 of her book, Professor Kilchenmann says that the logical, chronological sequence gives way to the 'oft sprunghaften, oft arabeskenhaft erweiterten oder gerafften und aussparenden Gestaltung der Kurzgeschichte.' And on p.113 she states: 'Nichts ereignet sich - vieles geschieht.' But she does not believe that this fragmentary technique should necessarily bring the reader to any consequential conclusion.

She echoes both O'Faolain and Piontek when she says that the writer of the short story is interested in the behaviour of his characters in given situations, and so the action of the short story serves to create that situation to which the characters may react, and she finds that in the short story, plot is replaced by "ein Stück herausgerissenes Leben" (p.17) a phrase strongly reminiscent of the description by C.W. Ceram (see p.56) when he says:'jede gute short story ist ein mit dem literarischen Messer herausgeschnittenes Stück Fleisch der Zeit.'

Because the narrator himself may be involved in the short story, the line between narrator and what is narrated becomes indistinct, according to Professor Kilchenmann, so that the treatment of time may become so arbitrary and irregular that the whole structure of traditional narrative prose may be lost.

Finally she points out that because the 'open' ending of the short story does not resolve any plot which precedes it, it is at variance with the technique of the Novelle, where the resolution is essential. Yet the open ending is not merely a rejection of the technique of the Novelle - it goes

to show that the short story is constructed on different principles from other forms of literature, and thereby gains an individuality and an entity of its own.

Kurt Kusenberg is more direct in outlining the requirements of the short story in an article entitled "Über die Kurzgeschichte".⁽¹⁾ He points to the discipline of length imposed by newspapers and magazines and says, while there can be no precise definition of length, his own view is that a short story should be between 1000 - 5000 words.

Kusenberg goes on to say that it is impossible to state what the short story must be; it is much easier to show all the things it can be. It can be realistic or unrealistic; it can have a psychological or stylised structure; it can be factual or dramatic in its presentation; it can have a climactic, an 'open' or a closed ending; it can point a moral - by implication rather than by words; it can symbolise the working of fate, c.f. the 'Falkentheorie' or Chekhov's gun on the wall; its language can be poetic or factual, rhythmic, staccato or frenzied - yet each sentence should contribute something new and relevant, essential to the whole.

Because of the physical brevity of the story, a good deal must be read between the lines. Characterisation can not, as in the case of the novel, be a leisurely matter of mere description, it must emerge from the actions, words, and even from the silences of the characters themselves, so that the writer must have an instinct for the balance of the story in deciding how much detail to leave out.

He goes on to make the point that in a short story the opening sentence

(1) Kurt Kusenberg: "Über die Kurzgeschichte" in Merkur, Köln/Berlin, XIX Jahrgang, Heft 9, Sept. 1965, pp.830ff.

should take the reader deep into the action of the story. In this connection he quotes Kafka's "Ein Landarzt", whose opening sentence we have already seen on page 68. In it we meet the central character, his problem and the attendant complications, the horse-motif which will run throughout the story and also the implication that the whole undertaking is an impossibility from the start.

Professor Kilchenmann points out that there are short stories which do have an introduction, and she quotes Gaiser's "Das Mittagsgesicht" as an example. She might have given a story by Bergengruen equally well, but neither of these is a particularly good example, because neither Bergengruen nor Gaiser is a typical or representative writer of short stories, and Gaiser, as we have seen (pp.119-120) can be highly individual in his openings.

Kusenberg speaks of the 'basic shape' of a story which can be presented almost in geometric pattern. He gives a number of examples of this pattern:

1. Someone estimates wrongly his position. He assumes he is unsailable, whereas he is in fact vulnerable in the extreme.
2. Someone turns to run away from whatever fate is threatening him, but instead runs straight into it.
3. Planning evil, a man achieves good. Or vice-versa.

Each of these given situations has a twist, an apparent paradox, giving an impression quite contrary to the expected, and the author uses his skill as a narrator to illustrate the weakness, the fallibility of man in contrast to the power of fate or man-made circumstances which threaten to overwhelm him.

Kusenberg makes out eight separate situations as examples of this basic

'geometric' pattern, and points out that such given situations require only the individual application of the individual writer, the close relationship of form and content achieving in the short story the same effect as that found in a poem.

The reference made by Kusenbergs to poetry, as to drama, is a recurring one. There is an increasing awareness of the power of language and expression, an awareness not only of each movement of speech but also of each implied thought and action, the importance not only of what is said, but of what is missed out. Nor is this in any way surprising in an age of symbolic advertisement in all media of communication. The short story expresses in prose what Brecht, Grass and Dürrenmatt express in drama, above all the knowledge that creative writing is speechborne reality. In the linguistic construction of a short story, poetic speech can reach a very high level of symbolic meaning in its simple terms, its everyday use of everyday language, as we have seen in Borchert's "Die drei dunklen Könige".

According to Kusenbergs, the reason why expressionism, dadaism, surrealism and any other art forms which like to experiment in actual form and structure have not had much effect on the short story is simply that for them the means of expression is their whole purpose. In the short story such experiment would create an imbalance sufficient to destroy its structure, hinder its function.

The fact that the short story form remains fundamentally traditional does not mean that the short story as such does not progress. In theme, background, sentiment and in the use of words to express these, it must be a medium of topicality, and here it has many advantages over both drama and the novel, as Heinrich Böll points out in his article in Die Zeit of the 29th November, 1963.

Writing probably with his tongue in his cheek, Böll points out that a short story may cost less than one mark to produce, yet its immediate earning is probably 100 times that figure, and may be further supplemented by broadcast fees and secondary rights, all quite soon after its first publication. This argument is of course valid enough, for the average writer is usually also an average human being, activated and motivated as other human beings are and having exactly the same problems of day-to-day existence and family life as other human beings have. For him, the short story exists primarily in its purely commercial form.

Seen however from the artistic and literary point of view, the main advantage of the short story over both the novel and stage drama lies in its immediacy, its topicality. Obviously, it may be less lasting in its effect than either a good book or a good play. Its purpose is immediate, it appears now and it reflects what is happening around us now. But this does not mean that a short story can never endure.

It is true, when topicality fades into yesterday, it is bound to lose some of its immediacy, and hence some of its effect, so that for example some of Maugham and O. Henry, while technically excellent, may no longer have as much power over the reader of today, because the background of today must be implicit in the stories of today, but stories of human relationships, of human fallibility, of the constant inconsistencies of man may well outlive the author himself, and be appreciated and enjoyed by generations of readers or film viewers. Indeed those stories of dramatic content which conjure up strongly-visual images in the mind may well achieve a wider fame through their 'second appearance' by means of film or television presentation, than they did when first written. Anton Chekhov provides several examples, the most recent being

"The Lady with the Little Dog", which was made into a highly successful film, and "In the Town of S.", a film currently running in London; the story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge", which became an award-winning film in 1967, was written by Ambrose Bierce in 1891; in much more recent times the short story entitled "Philomel Cottage" was written in the late 1920's by Agatha Christie, was adapted for the stage in the mid-thirties, filmed in the late thirties, and has since been re-filmed once and re-staged on scores of occasions, with the title "Love from a Stranger". Chekhov liked to develop character in depth, Bierce here deals with a man on the very brink of death in highly-dramatic circumstances, while Agatha Christie's study is of an uncomplicated girl dazzled into marriage by a man of the world, who intends to kill her for her money. The themes are those which can recur, the interest in them is therefore a constant factor.

Of the three critics we have mentioned, Heissenbüttel, Kilchenmann and Kusenbergl, the first two examine the short story as they see it as an accomplished work on a printed page. They are concerned with the end product of the writer's endeavour, while Kusenbergl is more directly concerned with the problems confronting the author as he sets about his task. He has of course a much wider experience himself of writing than have the others, and his exposition of the 'geometric pattern' is a wider application of the 'pattern story' found with very slight variation week after week in women's magazines. Nor does this in any way detract from it as a technique which can be - and indeed is - used by authors, especially in the world of commercial short story writing.

This brings us to the classification of the short story into types.

Walter Höllerer⁽¹⁾ suggests that the short story manifests itself in three distinct ways. The first he calls the Augenblickskurzgeschichte, in which the author concentrates all his attention on what is contained within a very short space of time - or he may take several such moments of time in order to compare and contrast them - but he does not develop any plot as such within each given period.

He calls his second kind of story the Arabeskenkurzgeschichte, where style is of greater importance than plot, presentation than action. He himself says: 'Die Arabesken-geschichte hat den Hang zur Eindampfung der Motive und der Handlung in Sprechbewegung.' (p.243)

Here any tension, any development, is shown more in the use of language than in the action round which it is built: 'Die Gestik der Sätze, die Syntax nimmt manches an Sinn auf, was nicht expressis verbis ausformuliert dasteht.' (p.243)

For his third classification, Höllerer makes a sub-division between his Überdrehungskurzgeschichte and his Überblendungskurzgeschichte, both of which make use of external effects in presenting their material. The former introduces sudden, often grotesque, and certainly unexpected twists to an ordinary situation, while the latter links and fuses events which are normally quite disconnected in space and time.

He explains it thus:

'Diese Art Geschichten arbeitet mit zusätzlichen Überraschungs- und Kompositionseffekten. Die Überdrehungsgeschichten lassen in einer alltäglichen Situation eine groteske oder doch abrupte Veränderung eintreten....' (p.244)

Höllerer's first type of short story, the Augenblickskurzgeschichte, in which one single moment of time, or one single episode is crystallised and

(1) Walter Höllerer : "Die kurze Form der Prosa"; Akzente 9; 1962, p. 233 ff

enlarged, represents a concept which is very commonly held and to which one finds frequent reference. Heinz Piontek for example says:⁽¹⁾

'Genau genommen geht es dem Kurzgeschichtenverfasser demnach um die epische Darlegung eines Zeitpunktes. In der Situation nimmt der Zeitpunkt sinnliche Gestalt an.'

Piontek goes on to make reference to Borchert's "Die Küchenuhr" and gives weight to his argument by showing how the central object, the kitchen clock, represents for the onlooker the moment in which the house was bombed; for the young man, the moment of homecoming; and for the reader, the sense of time being somehow misplaced.

For all three, in this one specific moment of time, the clock has its own peculiar significance. Beyond this time lies what? Eternity? Nothing? We are given no indication, and this open ending is part of the fascination of the story.

Höllerer divides the short story into three main groups, Klaus Doderer, as we have already seen on p.42, makes two main divisions, but there is so wide a range of possible variants that we might echo the comment of Walter Pabst, when he says there is no Novelle, but there are Novellen. The scope of the short story is infinite.

Equally varied are the techniques of presentation of the short story, yet certain patterns have emerged as the modern form has developed. Doderer states⁽²⁾: 'Meistens beginnt eine Kurzgeschichte ohne Einleitung', but Bender goes further:⁽³⁾ 'Nunmehr scheint es weder Anfang noch endgültiges Ende zu geben'.

(1) Heinz Piontek: "Ansichten über die deutsche Kurzgeschichte", Buchstab Zauberstab; Esslingen, 1959, p.68.

(2) Klaus Doderer: Die Kurzgeschichte in Deutschland; Wiesbaden, 1953, p.69.

(3) Hans Bender: "Ortsbestimmung der Kurzgeschichte", Akzente 9, 1962, p.225.

Generally it has been realised that an effective and immediate start to a story is of paramount importance. Think of an opening by Heinz Risse:

'Das Mädchen öffnete die Türe; ein fremder Herr stand davor und zog den Hut. Ausländer, dachte das Mädchen, der Schnitt des Anzugs, hierzulande trug man sich anders, und erst der Schlips, bunt wie ein Kolibri. Dabei war es ein älterer Herr, seine Haare waren schon grau, nicht nur an den Schläfen.' (1)

Here we have an implied situation, a suggestion of mystery, a hint of something unusual to follow. The interest of the reader is caught, his imagination stirred. This example is typical of the modern technique of presenting the problem of the story. Gone is the gentle introduction of the reader to the characters and their problems. The opening sentence now takes the reader deep into the action of the story, and this point about the opening sentence is one which the Americans have both practised and preached for a considerable time. Was it not O. Henry who first realised the value of instant contact between reader and writer and began a story thus: 'So I went to the doctor. "How long is it since you last took alcohol into your system?" he asked.' As recently as 1957, in The Writer's Handbook⁽²⁾, Helen Hinckley refers to the value of what she calls the four-point opening, which should give

- (a) the name of the central character
- (b) a descriptive phrase about him
- (c) a suggestion at least of where he is
- (d) what he is doing when first we meet him.

There is no doubt that this kind of opening is effective, both in taking the reader into the action of the story and also in compelling the writer now to get on with that action. It is certainly a firmly-established

(1) Heinz Risse: "Der Diebstahl", Buchhalter Gottes; München, 1958, p.35.
 (2) Helen Hinckley: The Writer's Handbook; Boston, 1957, p.205.

technique in short-story writing, both in America and in England.

In regard to the development of the short story after the opening, Doderer⁽¹⁾ and Piontek⁽²⁾ both accept that it is linear in development; Hans Bender says in his article that both Novelle and short story may be linear in development, while Höllerer maintains of the Novelle that 'der lineare Verlauf steuert auf einen vorbereiteten Schluss' (p.227) but goes on to say on p.233:⁽³⁾

'Die Handlung baut sich oft auf einzelne, festgehaltene, atmosphärisch genau bezeichnete Abschnitte auf, auf Kabinen des Erzählens, die in sich zusammenhalten, die sich gegenseitig stützen oder sich Widerpart geben.'

Ruth Lorbe makes the point⁽⁴⁾ that individual objects can gain in significance by their positioning in the short story, and Höllerer enlarges on this when he says (p.233):

'Subjekt und Objekt, Personen und Gegenstände nähern sich in den Momentsituationen aneinander an. Die Objekte bleiben nicht manipulierbar, sondern spielen mit, werden zuweilen grotesk vergrößert und erscheinen übermächtig.'

It is in this highlighting of what is perhaps the unexpected in the course of the narrative which gives individuality to the author's treatment of what might otherwise be a well-worn theme. It can help him to bring about the twist or the essential paradox which will give to his story the quality by which it will be remembered. The enlarging to grotesque proportions by concentrating on one object or characteristic so that it seems to fill the vision is quite commonly known as the microscope technique.

- (1) Klaus Doderer: Die Kurzgeschichte in Deutschland; Wiesbaden, 1953, p.69.
- (2) Heinz Piontek: "Ansichten über die deutsche Kurzgeschichte" in Buchstab Zauberstab; Esslingen, 1959, p.67.
- (3) Walter Höllerer: "Die kurze Form der Prosa", Akzente 9, 1962, pp.226-245.
- (4) Ruth Lorbe: "Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte der Jahrhundertmitte", Deutschunterricht, Jg, 9 Heft 1, 1957.

The modern writer is also much more aware of the technical importance of dialogue and of the contribution which it can make to the development of his story than was the writer of a hundred years ago, and Heinz Piontek draws attention to this fact when he says of dialogue:

'Er besitzt die Mundwärme ungehobelten Sprechens, bezieht Alltagswendungen und Berufsslang in seinen Wortlaut ein und schreckt nicht davor zurück, Banalitäten zu erörtern. Hier muss das Ohr des Aufnehmenden die Ober- und Untertöne heraushören, ja, eine Witterung entwickeln für das Verschwiegene und für die Andeutungen, die etwa eine Pause macht.' (1)

Wolfdietrich Schnurre makes a similar point⁽²⁾ when he states:

'Auch der Dialog untertreibt; er ist von einer an Raffinesse grenzenden Monotonie, doch hört man genau hin, nimmt man einen ungemein sensiblen Resonanzboden wahr, dessen Schwingungen auch dem scheinbar banalsten Wort noch ein eigenes Timbre verleihen. Andeuten gilt dem shortstory-Schreiber für wichtiger als erklären, auslassen für vielsagender als betonen.'

In any kind of written narrative, dialogue is an illusion of speech only, because conversation in reality so often consists of a series of monosyllables punctuated by nods. In writing, therefore, the author seeks to create the illusion of reality by using language which might be used in everyday life, while bringing to it much more definite purpose than is the case in everyday life. That much is common to all forms of creative writing, but the dialogue of the play for stage and television, of the radio play and of the short story will necessarily be different in quality, because in one case the speaker is both seen and heard, in the second heard, and in the third the words are for the eye of the reader only.

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- (1) Heinz Piontek: "Ansichten über die deutsche Kurzgeschichte", Buchstab Zauberstab; Esslingen, 1959, p.70.
 (2) Wolfdietrich Schnurre: "Kritik und Waffe"; Zur Problematik der Kurzgeschichte; Deutsche Rundschau, Baden-Baden, 1961, p.62.

The two main functions of dialogue are: firstly, to further the action of the story itself, and secondly to deepen the author's characterisation of the speaker by giving the reader/listener/viewer more insight into that character by what he says and how he says it. Where for example a youth is blocking the approach to the subway or tube, there is a considerable difference between the man who says to him: "Excuse me, may I come by?", the man who says: "Get out of the way, you little squirt", and the man who says: "Officer! This young man is blocking the entire footpath!"

Then again, while the purpose of dialogue remains the same, the writer will be faced by different problems in using it in the various forms of written narrative.

In writing for radio for example, the author must bring into his dialogue any necessary description which the hearer cannot see, while this is not necessary in television, where the picture should as far as possible be left to tell the story. In the case of the short story dialogue should always, however trivial it may appear to be, fulfil its function of furthering the development of the story in some way.

Simple as this purpose may seem there are very few writers in any language who can achieve the oblique brilliance of either Hemingway or Salinger, and it is only recently that German writers seem to have become aware of the technical importance of dialogue in the short story, where however such writers as Böll, Schnurre, Lenz and Roehler have, as we have seen, made significant and effective use of it.

At this point it might be convenient to consider short story writing from the point of view of the writer himself, so that we may be more aware of the problems which he faces. These we can place under the following headings:

- a) the question of reality and closeness to life
- b) the demand for discipline
- c) the rôle of the critic
- d) the personal involvement of the author

Thereafter we can decide on the standing of the purely German short story and how it now compares with the short story as it emerged in America.

Piontek in his article, says it was not until the 'Lost Generation' that the short story earned any literary standing in the world. He quotes Hemingway as being the greatest single influence on the modern short story, in which he says all the 'ordinary' problems of life find shape and form.

There is constant emphasis on 'das Alltägliche': '....er (der Erzähler) hält das weitin Allgemeine für bedeutungsvoller als den atemnehmenden Sonderfall....' (p.68)

And on the same page: 'Im Allgemeinen des Existierens fixiert er das Bedeutsame'.

A moment of time appears in all its gigantic detail - the constellation of a second. The things that matter are not the theatrical dramatic situations of state and government but the everyday, simple and ordinary ones. The art of the writer highlights what is of significance even in an apparently humdrum existence, so that the central character - and through him the reader - suddenly becomes aware of some fundamental truth, or quality or fact of life which affects him at that moment. There need be no leading up to this moment of illumination, there need be no derivative conclusion. The action of the story may simply stop at that point.....

Here Piontek echoes the findings of Doderer, both in his moment of

illumination cf. Doderer's switching on the light - and in the possible abruptness of the climax. He also refers to the extraordinary closeness of the short story to reality, which it mirrors and to which, for the reader, it brings perspective and in its use of dialogue, warmth. In speaking of it as the Graphik der Prosa, Piontek compares the short story in its intensity with drawing, which he says is the process whereby reality is so reduced that it appears on paper in its essential simplicity. The sharp, economic lines of the short story show the contours of the world, of life itself.

Limitations of length obviously impose a severe discipline on any writer, forcing him to discard all that is not absolutely essential in his presentation of dramatic reality according to the demands of the preconceived effects at which he is aiming.

Rudolf Borchardt has said⁽¹⁾ of what he calls the anarchical literature of the present day: 'Sie hasst jede Notwendigkeit, die Form, jede Strenge, die Gattung, jede Reinheit, den Typus.' It would seem that Borchardt here has in mind experimental forms of writing, now represented perhaps by Jürgen Becker in his Felder, but it is a sweeping generalisation which cannot justifiably be applied to the short story as a whole, (cf. Edgar Allan Poe: 'Nothing must be left to chance but should be constructed with mathematical exactness and logic'), so his comment should be restricted to what might be termed a 'fringe' group of writers only, to those in fact who are interested in experiment in the form of shorter prose writing today.

Skorna⁽²⁾ quotes the American, Truman Capote, as saying the short

(1) Rudolf Borchardt; Reden; Stuttgart, 1955, p.56.

(2) Hans Jürgen Skorna: Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte der Nachkriegszeit im Unterricht; Ratingen/Düsseldorf, 1967, p.10.

story is the most exacting of all prose forms 'because it demands so much discipline', and this would at least appear to be true, although the short story as a literary form has such extreme versatility that Hans Bender describes it⁽¹⁾ as 'das Chamäleon der literarischen Gattung, ein sensibles Reptil, das sich in die Farbe seiner Umgebung tarnt'.

A differentiation is sharply drawn between the 'literary' short story and the 'commercial' short story by Karlheinz Zierott⁽²⁾, who states:

'Diese literarische Kurzgeschichte ist mit der Zeitungskurzgeschichte keineswegs identisch. Nicht äussere Kürze ist ihre Grundforderung, sondern innere Kürze, das heisst äusserste Straffung des Geschehens, Verzicht auf entbehrliches Beiwerk und konsequente Konzentration auf den Kulminationspunkt.'

On the same page, Zierott makes a further point:

'Die künstlerische Kurzgeschichte besitzt - genau wie die künstlerische Novelle - ein 'zweckfreies Sein', sie ist nicht in erster Linie auf den Leser berechnet, sondern sie ist das künstlerische Gefäss für die Aussage eines Autors.'

This differentiation between the literary and the commercial short story was also made by Elizabeth Bowen as early as 1937, when she made the comment that all too often the non-commercial or 'free' short story made pretensions to art, and was thereby spoiled.⁽³⁾

Skorna too (p.19) makes reference to art and to some old prejudices: lyrical prose is accepted as art (Poesie), while more practical and restrained diction is only an art form (Kunstform), and he goes on to say that the

- (1) Hans Bender: "Zur Definition der Kurzgeschichte", Akzente, 9. Jahrgang, 1962, p.207.
- (2) Karlheinz Zierott: Die Kurzgeschichte in Literatur und Presse; München, 1952, p.84.
- (3) Elizabeth Bowen: Introduction to The Faber Book of Modern Stories, London, 1937, p.13.

tendency still prevails to regard much more readily as great literature oppressive and overloaded language, rather than the simple and unassuming, yet clear and precise diction of the modern short story.

And yet the rôle of the critic is considerably greater than it was even ten years ago. Books, collection of stories, plays are all reviewed, not only in the press, but also on the radio and even in television interviews. In 1965 for example, Westdeutscher Rundfunk ran a programme entitled "Selbstkritik der Kritiker". Publicity connected with such reviews and such criticisms must make greater demands on the critic himself, so that the quality of criticism should be correspondingly higher, if professional integrity is maintained.

A good criticism, a good review, can be of considerable importance to a publisher, but so, paradoxically, can a controversially adverse one. Hochhuth's recent play Soldaten is a case in point, where the storm of argument arising over the manner of his characterisation of Churchill himself and the motives impugned to him - bolstered as they were by judicious references to 'secret evidence' in the vaults of the bank - gave such world-wide publicity to the play that its box-office success was assured.

Marcel Reich-Ranicki was invited to sit in as an observer and critic at numerous meetings of the Gruppe 47, and he reports that Martin Walser, on the 28th October 1961, stated with cheerful abandon that all literary critics of all times and in all countries were no more than 'Lumpenhunde'.⁽¹⁾ Here he allied himself with both Dickens and Tolstoy, whose views on critics of their time were comparably outspoken.

(1) Marcel Reich-Ranicki: Wer schreibt, provoziert; DTV 1966, p.57.

Reich-Ranicki however makes several very valid points regarding present-day criticism. He writes first of all about the kind of criticism favoured by the Gruppe 47 itself - that of the 'forum', where other writers listen, comment, advise or criticise, on hearing a reading of the work in question. He accepts that this kind of criticism is valuable to the writer, freely-given and outspoken as it is - why else would writers voluntarily submit to it? And why else would they voluntarily vote that such meetings should continue? - but as he points out, it is criticism based entirely upon a hearing of the work, which therefore depends on the reading ability of the author, who may be a talented writer and a terrible reader. Further, the reader will be able to influence the listener in a way that the written word alone might not do - by inflection, emphasis or gesture.

The awareness of the author of the implications, the structures, the techniques of writing in modern times, has brought with it a realisation of his own personal responsibility and involvement in his work. Obviously, no writer can remain completely impersonal. No two people can view an object in exactly the same way, and the effective presentation of a story, as in the case of a photograph, depends very largely on angle, as Heissenbüttel points out (p.156), and on highlighting. But to what extent should an author project his own political, religious or moral beliefs into his writing? To what extent should he try to influence his readers towards a certain course of action? Should he consciously try to influence them at all? These questions have been much discussed by writers themselves in recent years, and it is interesting to compare some of their views.

Heinrich Böll has never been in doubt:

"Dass der Autor engagiert sein soll, halte ich für selbstverständlich. Für mich ist das Engagement die Voraussetzung, es ist sozusagen die Grundierung, und was ich auf dieser Grundierung anstelle, ist das, was ich unter Kunst verstehe."(1)

It is perhaps relevant to notice that Böll made this statement to Horst Bienek after he had written his Entfernung von der Truppe, yet it is clear that he wants to exercise an effect on his contemporaries. He wants to depict reality so that, because of their awareness of it, people may improve it, as did Charles Dickens, of whom Böll himself has said:

"Er hatte einen Erfolg wie er selten einem Schriftsteller beschieden ist: die Gefängnisse wurden reformiert, die Armenhäuser und Schulen einer gründlichen Betrachtung gewürdigt, und: sie änderten sich." (2)

Böll is always a radical critic of his time and an emotional moralist. A Christian, he is tolerant of his neighbours though he does not necessarily love them, and although Catholicism is the practical basis of his own life and appears in much of his writing, he does not narrow his field to the conflict between the ideal of Catholicism and life as it exists. His early stories, concerned with war, showed not how men make war, but what war makes of men.

While Heinrich Böll may have no doubts about his task, Siegfried Lenz is of a more doubting nature. He admits the writer's awareness of the contemporary scene, but hesitates as to how definite his own actions should be in attempting to right the wrongs he sees. In 1962, Lenz was awarded a literary prize by the town of Bremen, and in his address of acknowledgement he says:

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- (1) Horst Bienek: Werkstattgespräch mit Schriftstellern, DTV, 1965, p.149.
 (2) Heinrich Böll: Erzählungen, Hörspiele, Aufsätze; Köln, 1961, p.340.

'In unserer Welt wird auch der Künstler zum Mitwisser - zum Mitwisser von Rechtlosigkeit, von Hunger, von Verfolgung und riskanten Träumen.... Es scheint mir, dass seine Arbeit ihn erst dann rechtfertigt, wenn er seine Mitwisserschaft zu erkennen gibt, wenn er das Schweigen übergeht, zu dem andere verurteilt sind.' (1)

Here he admits his awareness, but Lenz is no revolutionary, no fiery agitator, and while others may crusade he makes the position of the author clear in a later statement: (2)

'.... der angestammte, der ordentliche Platz eines Autors... ist der Platz zwischen den Stühlen.... Er sollte, meine ich, keinem verpflichtet sein.' (p.48)

He has something to say on indifference too:

'Gleichgültig sein, das heisst, der Welt seine leidenschaftliche Aufmerksamkeit zu entziehen, heisst vergessen und stumm verachten zu können, heisst sich unverantwortlich zu fühlen für das, was ist, und für das, was geschieht. In der Gleichgültigkeit ohne Hoffnung liegt das Eingeständnis unserer Abdankung: wir geben das Sein sich selbst preis, enttäuschte, wenn auch besonnene Karnevalsprinzen, die die Masken ablegen und sich in ein Exil der vollkommenen Tatlosigkeit zurückziehen.' (p.68)

And finally:

'Deshalb wäre eine Welt von Gleichgültigen eine Welt von tatenlosen Zuschauern.' (p.71)

Although Lenz encourages action on the part of others, he himself as a writer would prefer to remain ein gelassener Beobachter, perhaps a kind of recording angel.

Walter's key sentence from Ein Flugzeug über dem Haus, "Ich kann das nicht ändern" expresses also his philosophy as a writer, yet he holds it to

(1) Siegfried Lenz: In "Die Welt"; 27th January, 1962.

(2) Siegfried Lenz: Beziehungen; Hamburg, 1970.

be the task of a writer to describe what he sees, although he has not the power to alter it, and also because he has not the power to alter it.

Wolfdietrich Schnurre is appreciated probably more by the connoisseur than by the general public. He does not have as wide an appeal as Böll, yet his parable "Das Los unserer Stadt" in the book of the same name⁽¹⁾ expresses beautifully the anxiety of all mankind in a vision of today:

'Ingenieure haben bei Befestigungsarbeiten am Rande der Stadt eine furchtbare Entdeckung gemacht. Sie sprengten eben einen die Zufahrtstrasse bedrohenden Felsen vom Berg, als sich unterhalb der Gesteinswunde ein ungeheueres Auge auftat.

Inzwischen ist die schlimmste aller Befürchtungen Wahrheit geworden: Unsere Stadt wurde auf der Brust eines schlafenden Riesen erbaut: nun haben ihm die Ingenieure eine Braue gesprengt, und er beginnt zu erwachen. Es sind bereits zahlreiche Kommissionen ernannt worden, die den Auftrag erhielten, das Ohr des Riesen zu finden, um ihm den Wunsch vorzutragen, er möge die Gewogenheit haben, doch noch einige Zeit liegenzubleiben.....'

Gerd Gaiser too is committed, apparently brooding still on what might have been, and appealing to instinct and sentiment against a muted background of Blut und Boden.

In one way or another, all of these writers have given their views or shown their feelings as to the position of the author. All are concerned, as are the critics we have quoted, with the short story as it now is in Germany specifically, but is the German short story now an independent form, in some way different from that of other countries?

Helmut Motekat admits the influence of English, and even more of American writers on the early German writers of short stories, but he claims that there is now a purely German short story, appropriate to the needs of

(1) Wolfdietrich Schnurre: Das Los unserer Stadt; München, 1959, p.140.

expression in Germany today and reflecting German life and German problems.⁽¹⁾

He maintains that the short story is the vehicle ideally suited to modern life as he says:

'Mehr noch als die anderen Prosaformen scheint sie geeignet, Gefäss zu sein für die dichterische Vergegenwärtigung des modernen Daseins und des von ihm bestimmten Lebensgefühl.'

He compares the immense development of the short story in America after the middle of the nineteenth century with that in Germany after 1945, pointing to the same background of uncertainty in life, of rapidly-changing circumstances over which the individual has no control, to the growing realisation that values and concepts which had hitherto governed the lives of an entire people were now no longer valid, and to the huge and expanding interest of the people in foreign thought, foreign views and foreign literature - all of which led to a great deal of writing, at first mostly imitative.

Here Motekat has to a large extent repeated the words of Bret Harte when he wrote for the Cornhill Magazine in 1899. What Harte applied to the American short story then, Motekat applies to the German now, but he says further that if the journalist reflects his time, his mirror is not only the newspaper, but the short story itself (c.f. Rudyard Kipling), and as the story concentrates solely on the happening, then the art of the writer must convey to the reader all the implied background of character, conflict and situation.

(1) Helmut Motekat: "Gedanken zur Kurzgeschichte", Deutschunterricht 9 Jahrgang, 1957, Heft 1, pp.20-35.

Wolfdietrich Schnurre⁽¹⁾ declares roundly that....

'die Kurzgeschichte hat sich unter den Händen ihrer prominentesten Schreiber zu einem der sensibelsten Seismographen der sozialen, politischen und allgemein menschlichen Verhältnisse herausgebildet..... In ihrem Mittelpunkt steht der Mensch. Nicht der Mensch, wie er sein könnte; der Mensch, wie er ist....'

This disarms the criticism which is sometimes levelled at the 'open' ending of the modern short story, where no solution is reached, nothing is clarified, nothing certain. But this lack of solution is surely symbolic of our age. If, as we have seen, there is uncertainty in the minds of the characters in the stories of modern times, there must also be uncertainty in the minds of the present-day writers towards the complexities of the age in which they live. No writer today is as assured as his counterpart of a hundred years ago. The present-day writer will therefore be unwilling - or indeed unable - to commit himself to direct, conclusive symbolism, but will rather give to the reader a more provocative, though less conclusive evocation of idea and argument.

Motekat maintains that the German short story does try to avoid the 'open' ending by indicating cause and effect, but it is difficult to find much evidence to support him in this claim. Indeed the theory has been put forward that, since every human situation is a transitory one, it would be wrong to try to stabilise and to make absolute any present experience simply because of the constant and continuing movement of change - but this in turn is difficult to support, because if the writer is to mirror his time, then surely he must do so rather in the manner of a photograph, which arrests a moment of time as it is recorded.

(1) Wolfdietrich Schnurre: "Kritik und Waffe", Deutsche Rundschau: Baden-Baden, 1961, p.61.

Sean O'Faolain, in his introduction⁽¹⁾ says that a short story

'....is like a picture, caught in the flick of a camera's trigger, that comes nearer and nearer to clarity in the bath of hypo which is the writer's blend of skill and imagination; he trembles over it.... waiting for the final perfection of his certainty, of his desire. Then the experience.... is fixed forever.'

Here again we have the analogy of a moment being caught and preserved in words, comparable to the sudden illumination of light, the recording for ever of a single moment (or episode in a man's life), to which most critics have made reference in some form or another in regard to the short story.

(1) Sean O'Faolain: Introduction to The Stories of Sean O'Faolain, London, 1958, p.IX.

c) OBSERVATIONS ON THE SHORT STORY TODAY.

The short story has been - is still being - analysed and discussed on both sides of the Atlantic in regard to its techniques, its aims and to the position of the author himself. We have just examined at length some of the German views of these aims and techniques.

Individually, it is probably true that authors rather resent being 'classified' in any way, as they maintain that their writing stems from an inner urge which does not necessarily conform to any one pattern of regulations or theories.

Heinrich Böll says that he writes.... "weil ich glaube, dass es noch Mitteilbares gibt and weil ich an die Dauer der Sprache glaube."⁽¹⁾ He also says that the short story is his favourite form of writing because it is both modern and concerned with now.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt maintains: "Schreiben ist das Bewältigen der Welt durch die Sprache."⁽²⁾

If we are to judge the position of the short story as such in the literature of today, then we must consider some of the views of critics both in America and in Europe on the part played by the short story in relation to literature as a whole and to its purpose as a form of expression.

Hans Jürgen Skorna⁽³⁾ thinks that in giving expression to the awareness of the contemporary, the short story contributes directly to the concept of a universality or at least an internationality of literature and literary ideas, while the quality of actuality is also emphasised by

(1) Horst Bienek: Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern; DTV, 1965, p.182.

(2) ibid., p.125.

(3) H.J. Skorna: Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte der Nachkriegszeit im Unterricht; Düsseldorf, 1967, p.20.

William Peden⁽¹⁾ who maintains that: "No other literary form is so close to the rapidly changing pulse of the times".

To illustrate the individuality and flexibility of the short story, Peden refers to the sparse simplicities of Hemingway's "Indian Camp" and the more leisurely complexities of Kathrine Anne Porter's "Flowering Judas". He maintains that the short story can be a vehicle for depicting the most ardent social or moral convictions, like Nelson Algren's "A Bottle of Milk for Mother" or Irwin Shaw's "Sailor off the Bremen". It can have the robust good humour of William Faulkner's "A Bear Hunt" or, like Jean Stafford's "The Interior Castle" it can reek of the smell of the sick room. It can be a fully plotted story of intense physical conflict or a muted study in mood and atmosphere more akin to lyrical poetry than to traditional fiction. Like the stories of Henry James, it can be a quiet character study rich in psychological overtones and almost devoid of physical action, or it can be a 'slice of life' closer to reportage than to what Percy Lubbock has called the comprehensive art of fiction. -

In The Sense of Fiction⁽²⁾ the aims of fiction as a whole are defined (p.X111) as being

'to arrange human experience in such a way that it is readily accessible for interpretation.... A short story therefore may have meaning more intense than what we have felt or known in our own acts.... so reading a short story should provide us, among other things, with the experience of discovering and exploring those ultimate realities which the ordinary world obscures'.

It is further pointed out that no short story of merit is an evasion. It must be an honest confrontation of the mysteries of reality.

(1) William Peden: The American Short Story; Boston, 1964, pp.6ff.

(2) R.L. Welker & H. Gower (Ed): The Sense of Fiction; New Jersey, 1966.

The larger-than-life presentation, the 'high-lighting' of a particular aspect of the given situation, or the focusing of attention on one facet of character in order to achieve the 'preconceived effect' of the author is mentioned by every knowledgeable writer on the subject of the short story. It is here that the inventive talent of each individual writer lies, here that one writer may be raised above the others, for where language is used only literally and no longer symbolically, the writer no longer invents, he merely recapitulates.

Helmut Heissenbüttel⁽¹⁾ points out that all media which reproduce human experience - radio, T.V., film, literature, etc. - present a world of artificiality, in a sense a hallucinatory world, and that in literature the hallucinatory element is inherent, so that the reader as he reads can look upon the reality of everyday life and feel that it is perhaps the everyday 'norm' which is false. The hallucinatory world of the dream does not indicate a world of pure fantasy because the elements of which it consists are taken directly from commonplace, everyday experience - as even the surrealists admitted.

Symbolism and hallucination may of course lead directly to the grotesque, and while this can conjure up the nightmares of Hoffmann, the modern concept is less extreme. The present tendency is to extend reason and rationalism until they become so illogical as to become absurd. This is the case particularly in Germany in recent years as we have seen, first with Schnurre, Heckmann and Kusenbergr and then with Hildesheimer, Lettau and Böll, all of

(1) Helmut Heissenbüttel: Über Literatur; Olten/Freiburg, 1966, pp.172ff.

whom have made use of these systematised patterns of authority and bureaucracy which so readily lend themselves to this kind of treatment. The scope now given to the writer in Germany, which enables him freely to comment on any aspect of social, political or indeed any authoritative structures or attitudes, is an indication of the greater degree of tolerance shown by society towards writers in general.

After all, any writers of merit are concerned with what is and with the implications of the life all around us, which they reflect in their writing. Life itself can be regarded as a kind of short story, although in the short story it is often shown as a journey of one kind or another. Fundamentally, stories are no longer a means of religious teaching, nor as a rule are they written specifically to emphasise a moral or to put forward a political theory. In a short story, characters are presented against a background of the social scene, but they are not meant to represent that social scene. Therein lies the essential difference between a short story and some kind of sermon or didactic parable.

The modern short story aims at the presentation of truth - which can of course be seen from different angles - in an apparently unforced and spontaneous way, but this aim is difficult to achieve, so that a story of essential human values, which is well-told and which contains this underlying value of truth is a stone of rare quality indeed.

There is at present a much greater awareness of conditions of life and of the changing world, and of the need for further change where social, moral, political and psychological problems seem to have become a general heritage among mankind. This awareness has been brought about by international news coverage, and the internationality of news has inevitably given rise to a

sharing of expression both in the writing of prose and drama.

Books can be translated quickly and published in any quarter of the world, while plays produced in one country can be seen in another in a matter of months. Films are slower to produce and may not be so relevant to contemporary problems. The short story usually remains in the country of its origin, but although it is short, it can and does reflect both depth of feeling and social awareness. A 'characteristic form' may be impossible to define, but as Kusenbergh has pointed out, part of the strength of the short story as a literary form lies in the fact that it can so readily adapt itself to a variety of requirements. Is the story intended purely for magazine production? Or is that the first step to radio or television presentation? A different framework and different limitations are imposed in the writing of what is to be heard and not seen. A different technique is required.

Nor is it possible to define style, because style as such can never be anything more than the method which a particular author finds most effective in giving expression to a particular theme. The style of each story therefore must be decided by the author's purpose in that story. Thus a story may be told without dialogue (cf. the brooding effect of Kafka), or it may be entirely in dialogue; (cf. Ilse Aichinger: "Zu keiner Stunde"); it may be in symbolic or parable form in the manner of Aesop (cf. Heinz Risse), or it may have the lyric quality of Ingeborg Bachmann, or the discontinuity of Becker - each time producing a different effect by the variation both of style and of form.

Form and style are inextricably involved with language and structure, so that it is more fruitful to compare the techniques of today with

those of preceding days, rather than make a comparison between different kinds of modern stories. The surprising fact to emerge from such a comparison is not how greatly they differ, but rather how little they differ in their essential structure.

The principles set out by Edgar Allan Poe in 1842 - that a story must have one predetermined effect; that it must possess complete unity by excluding everything which does not contribute directly to that effect; and that it must be short, but not so short that the pre-established design cannot be realised - are just as valid now as they were then, and the writer who is professional in outlook is fully aware of them.

One main difference between the modern short story and that of a hundred years ago lies primarily in the desire of the modern writer to express himself more succinctly than did his father or his grandfather. This applies to all literature anywhere, but in German the effect has been greater because more direct expression has brought about a simplification of grammatical structures within the sentence, and an avoidance of those heavy adjectival-participial phrases which so encumbered German prose writing in the past. As a result, modern German prose is much lighter to read.

Consider for example a sentence by Gottfried Keller, after three pages of preamble to "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe":⁽¹⁾

'Wie nun die Männer mit Behagen ihr Frühstück einnahmen, und mit zufriedennem Wohlwollen den Kindern mitteilten, die nicht von der Stelle wichen, solange gegessen und getrunken wurde, liessen sie ihre Blicke in der Nähe und Ferne herumschweifen und sahen das Städtchen räucherig glänzend in seinen Bergen liegen; denn das reichliche Mittagsmahl, welches die Seldwyler alle Tage bereiteten, pflegte ein weithin scheinendes Silbergewölk über ihre Dächer emporzutragen, welches lachend an ihren Bergen hinschwebte.'

(1) Gottfried Keller: Die Leute von Seldwyla

There are examples in Thomas Mann also. In "Beim Propheten"⁽¹⁾ we find:

'.... An den Peripherien der Grossstädte, dort, wo die Laternen spärlicher werden und die Gendarmen zu zweien gehen, muss man in den Häusern emporsteigen, bis es nicht weiter geht, bis in schräge Dachkammern, wo junge, bleiche Genies, Verbrecher des Traumes, mit verschränkten Armen vor sich hinbrüten, bis in billig und bedeutungsvoll geschmückte Ateliers, wo einsame, empörte und von innen verzehrte Künstler, hungrig und stolz, in Zigarettenqualm mit letzten und wüsten Idealen ringen.'

And again in Robert Musil's "Die Amsel":⁽²⁾

'Später, in ihrer Studienzeit, schwärmten die beiden Freunde für eine materialistische Lebensklärung, die ohne Seele und Gott den Menschen als physiologische oder wirtschaftliche Maschine ansieht, was er ja vielleicht auch wirklich ist, worauf es ihnen aber gar nicht ankam, weil der Reiz solcher Philosophie nicht in ihrer Wahrheit liegt, sondern in ihrem dämonischen, pessimistischen, schaurig-intellektuellen Charakter.'

Sentences as long as these, and some infinitely more involved, may be found in almost any writer of the pre-1914 era, although it must be pointed out that there were writers even then who realised the importance of the shorter sentence and of the evocative image. Johannes Schlaf for example showed an awareness of the techniques of his art well in advance of his time, as can be seen from In Dingsda:⁽³⁾

'Am Vormittag kam ich an. Der Zug - halb Güter- halb Personenzug - entlud sich seiner sechs Passagiere; der Bahnhofsinspektor kroch aus seinem Bureau hervor, presste sich die rote Mütze auf den Kopf und trug langsam seinen dicken Bauch am Zuge entlang.'

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- (1) Thomas Mann: "Beim Propheten", in Gesammelte Werke, Vol.8, Oldenburg, 1960, p.362.
 (2) Robert Musil: "Die Amsel", first appeared im Nachlass zu Lebzeiten, Zürich, 1924: here quoted from Prosa, Dramen, Späte Briefe, Hamburg, 1957, p.522.
 (3) Johannes Schlaf: In Dingsda, 3 Aufl.; Leipzig, 1912, pp.7-8.

That was written in 1892, but might have been written by Böll yesterday.

Compare the sentences by Keller, Mann or Musil with Borchert's opening to "Die drei dunklen Könige":

'Er tappte durch die dunkle Vorstadt. Die Häuser standen abgebrochen gegen den Himmel. Der Mond fehlte und das Pflaster war erschrocken über den späten Schritt'. (1)

These three short sentences describe more by implication than a whole paragraph of detached description could do.

Much has been made of the restriction placed upon the writer by the necessary economy of words in the writing of a short story, but this is an economy which applies primarily to the commercial short story, and if it is viewed as a restriction, then it should apply only to the commercial short story, where a limit is fixed as absolute by the magazine or periodical for which the author is writing.

Chekhov however, Maupassant, Rudyard Kipling, Henry James, Somerset Maugham - all wrote stories of full artistic development. They were written as 'short stories', but here the word 'short' is a comparative term, not mathematically calculated and set at a specific figure. The length of their stories is never necessarily the same, because each story is only as long as its artistic development requires.

'Development' in a story situation may simply be in extent, each event growing naturally out of the previous one, or it may be in depth, where a richness of texture is achieved by imagery, or it can combine both.

A writer like H.E. Bates excels in creating texture and in a story like "The Mower", with its overtones of drowsy sensuality against a rich English summer countryside, we can feel the heat of the sun, the welcome shadow of the

(1) Wolfgang Borchert: "Die drei dunklen Könige" in Das Gesamtwerk, Hamburg, 1959, p.185.

hedge, we can hear the scythe as it cuts, and the jangle of the bit as the horse tosses its head, we can smell the fresh-cut grass and the already-drying hay. Action here is minimal, but of the German writers only Wolf-dietrich Schnurre seems able to express in prose a similar deep-rooted understanding of the land e.g. in his "Die Rohrdommel ruft jeden Tag".

Has the short story developed much in Germany since the days of Kahlschlag? Then the effect was achieved by the very bareness of the narrative. Simplicity of style and language, a conscious 'underwriting' of tragedy, a constructive philosophy amidst the destruction of war, and the symbolism of stark reality were the techniques of that period. The very name, on the analogy of laying bare a forest by cutting away, is symbolic. These techniques were used in the main by people who had themselves experienced, as adults, the preceding decade - Böll, Gaiser, Aichinger - but as the 1950's went on, the outlook changed. This was not due simply to the fact that a new generation of writers began to appear. Some did, it is true, but in the beginning the majority were authors such as Hans Erich Nossack (b.1901), Ernst Kreuder (b.1903), Arno Schmidt (b.1914), Ernst Schnabel (b.1913), Rolf Schroers (b.1919) and Heinz Risse (b.1898), all of whom were sufficiently mature and experienced to be able to adapt themselves and so exploit and express the changing situation.

For it was the outlook which was changing, and as it did so, it brought new themes with it. The essential simplicity of the Kahlschlag period remained, a simplicity now of expression and sentence structure, but it was used to express not the past as much as the present - critically or factually - and to indicate the future.

Furthermore, German writers now began more fully to exploit the use of

dialogue in their writing - an increasing awareness due at least in part to Hemingway? - so that the potential of the short story was much more fully realised.

In the past German prose writers tended either to ignore dialogue altogether as a constructive factor, or to use it simply as a vehicle for their own wit and pedantry. Now, however, they have realised its function as a positive one, perhaps by indicating the disillusionment of the writer with contemporary life and social conditions.

Frank O'Connor in the introduction to his book The Lonely Voice⁽¹⁾ says that the short story speaks for 'a submerged population group' which may be Gogol's officials, Turgenev's serfs, Maupassant's prostitutes, Chekhov's doctors and teachers, Sherwood Anderson's provincials - all of whom are dreaming of escape, of a betterment in their condition. There is always a sense of loneliness, of outlawed figures on the fringe of society, so that the short story 'remains by its very nature remote from the community - romantic, individualistic, and intransigent'.

In any form of avant-garde or experimental expression, the writer's degree of involvement is important. He must decide at the outset whether he himself is to remain neutral, an observer only of what he is presenting as fact, or whether he is to be involved in any way in his presentation. Is he, in other words, to be 'activist'? Much will depend on his decision here, for the 'activist' writer aims much more directly at one particular audience or one particular market than does the author who remains uncommitted.

In this way a book such as Felder by Jürgen Becker - which is much

(1) Frank O'Connor: The Lonely Voice, London, 1963, Introduction pp.18-21.

too difficult for the average reading public to read with any understanding or enjoyment - would have a much wider effect amongst other writers as a basis for discussion or possibly as a stimulus towards further experiment. Nor would this do Becker any harm, for any writer who is discussed obviously benefits. (William Faulkner wrote The Sanctuary with this in mind, then having drawn nationwide attention to his book, was able more effectively to develop the talent he knew he possessed). The Angry Young Men of yesterday are frequently the pillars of middle-aged propriety today.

It is however difficult, if not impossible, for a writer of conviction to remain wholly impartial when writing on a controversial theme, so there is always the danger of his falling between two stools. To be successful, he must either be passionately sincere in presenting as a committed writer some theme in which he believes, or he must remain dispassionately factual in the role of neutral observer. Kushwant Singh at an International Writers' Conference said that political commitment was apt to be loudly proclaimed, but his own personal commitment as a writer was to four themes 'truth, love, solitude and death'.⁽¹⁾

It is a curious fact that all thoughtful creators of fiction return again and again to those aspects of human character which have themselves been the basis of religious discussion, even of controversy: the qualities of good and evil. Yet to talk of some instinctive, inherent religion in mankind is to confuse the issue further, and to attempt to use the short story to convert or to justify by means of artificial conversations or artificial situations is to court failure.

(1) Kushwant Singh: In The Times, 23rd August, 1962.

All fiction is open to be misconstrued, and modern critics are just as apt as their predecessors to see all fiction as symbolic of something - but the story which is written for its own intrinsic truth and without conscious symbolism on the part of the author, is usually the most effective. Our world consists of people, the interest of people is in the activities of other people, and it is the writer's awareness and his perception which enable him to write of the reality around him as he by his particular talents is able to see it.

Whatever method he may use in order best to produce the 'pre-determined effect' of his story, the choice is his, and his alone. It will depend upon his instinct, his ability and his training as a creative writer. This is the unknown quantity which can never be eliminated from creative work, and although for most writers, writing means working to a strict pattern of composition and routine, it is the certainty and the vision behind the author's handling of his theme which can lift a short story - or indeed any work of fiction - above the level of a momentary diversion, to make the reading a rewarding study. For the novelist, the vision comes first, and the comment follows on it, but for the short story writer vision and comment must be as nearly as possible simultaneous. Great short stories somehow contain a moment of acute perception which very few writers - even the most gifted - can achieve, and that only rarely. Yeats it was who said:

'Only that which does not teach, which does not cry out, which does not persuade, which does not condescend, which does not explain, is irresistible.' (1)

More and more, the short story in Germany occupies a contemporary

(1) W.B. Yeats: Essays; London, 1924, p.423.

position comparable to that of drama in England in the Elizabethan age, the English essay at the time of Addison and Steele, or the English novel during the Victorian era. It seems increasingly likely that German literary historians of the future may find in the short story rather than the novel, or drama, or poetry, the major literary contribution of recent years. That the Germans themselves have now accepted the short story both as a literary form and as a mirror of the times is shown by the fact that it is now widely studied in schools there, and while this is a practice long established in our own schools - and indeed in America resident authors at universities use the short story as a basis for teaching creative writing - this has not been the case in Germany until most recent times.

That it is now a subject for study is significant on two counts, the first being the mere acceptance of the short story as a literary form. The second, and more important for the future, is in the effect of such teaching on succeeding generations in regard to the further development of the short story itself. Pupils who have learned to discuss technique and content of good short stories will inevitably influence the future of the short story themselves, both as critical readers and also as future writers.

Nor does this necessarily render invalid the comment already made by Professor Kilchenmann on the study in American universities of the short story, which tends to reduce its standing in the eyes of the students. There they are considering a purely commercial proposition, the short story as a product. In schools it is studied in order to inculcate an appreciation of the form as literature, with the study of technique as part of that form.

Robert Ulshöfer in fact outlines a number of reasons for studying the short story in school, describing the teachers who use it for interpretation as progressive and 'lebensnah'. For the upper school, he suggests the following as a basis for study:⁽¹⁾

- a) Kafka's abstract tales: the metaphysical loneliness of man;
- b) War, Want and Spiritual Struggle: cf Borchert, Eich, Böll, Gaiser, etc.
- c) Social-revolutionary pieces: Brecht.

To counter any argument against the subject of war, Bernard Schulz says⁽²⁾ let us study the subject, instead of avoiding it as though it did not exist; let us see what life was like at that time, what it is now, and finally what it could be.

No doubt the question of school curricula arouses as much debate in Germany as it does here, but of interest to us is the number of books and articles which have recently appeared on the subject of the short story and its possible use in schools. It is a matter very much under discussion at the moment.

The last word could well rest with Professor R. Hinton Thomas, now of the University of Warwick, who, in his excellent introduction to *Seventeen Modern Stories* (Oxford University Press, 1965) says simply:

'There can be no adequate picture of German literature over the last twenty years without a substantial section on the short story.'

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- (1) Robert Ulshöfer: "Unterrichtliche Probleme bei der Arbeit mit der Kurzgeschichte"; Deutschunterricht, Jg.10, 1958, Heft 6, pp.5-35.
 - (2) Bernard Schulz: *Der literarische Unterricht*, Vol.2; Düsseldorf, 1964, p.74.

CONCLUSION :

The aim of this research from the outset has been to trace the development of the short story in German literature and to establish its place as a literary form acceptable to writers and to critics alike. This we have tried to do by following its historical development first as it became apparent in America, then in the countries of Europe, and finally in Germany itself.

We have seen how adherence to the Novelle - encouraged by the attitude of the critics of the time - obstructed any rapid development in Germany of a form which might have been comparable to that appearing in other countries, and how the effect of this obstruction endured until the difference between Novelle and short story became clear in the minds of the writers themselves, and until the public, after the first world war, began to accept American short stories.

The stimulus given by the work of Hemingway and Kafka to those interested in the technique of short story writing brought impetus to its development, with Hemingway bringing to German writers a completely new awareness of the importance of dialogue, while Kafka's influence lay chiefly in theme; the Kahlschlag, with its immediate symbolism of drastically cutting back and laying bare prior to making a fresh start, has proved to be the starting-point of what has so far been the period of greatest development in short story technique in Germany, the decade of the 1950's.

By detailed analysis of stories from this period, and by making a selection of authors and discussing theme, style and technique, we have

shown the emergence of a short story in Germany which is native German in theme and background and therefore up to a point native German in treatment and style; although we cannot altogether support the enthusiasts who lay claim to a native and distinctively German form of the short story as such, it is certainly true that the short story is as vigorous in Germany today as in any part of the world. Its establishment became complete during the 1950's and has been expanded to a remarkable degree as a result of the publication of so many collections of stories - a far greater number than in this country during the same period - while the new internationality of writing has brought fresh themes, forms and styles to experimental endeavour in the early 1960's; in the comments of German writers on the subject of the short story there is obviously a new awareness of the technical problems of short story expression.

The importance of the short story as a literary form of the present day stems to a great extent from its ability to represent every aspect of contemporary life. Its adaptability offers immense scope to the creative writer of imagination and vision, set as it is against the shifting, restless background of current change. Its very shape can give freedom to the symbolic in the author's expression. Its brevity serves, not in any way as a handicap, but rather as a focussing lens which excludes all but the single incident, or aspect of the given situation which now, in its isolation, can be seen the more clearly by the reader.

It is difficult to define, because of the wide variety of things which it can do. This lack of an adequate generic term in German to apply to the short story in its several guises may be - and often quite obviously is -

a source of irritation to the Germans themselves. Yet surely the name is less important than what is written, and it is significant at the present time that it is the writers themselves who are discussing every aspect of the short story - its form, its possibilities, its techniques, its disciplines - it is the writers who are establishing the conventions as they write. They are enjoying a creative freedom hitherto unknown, because they do not have to comply with a set of restricting conditions previously laid down, not by writers, but by 'literary critics'. It is this freedom and interest in creative technique which has so encouraged development in recent times, and has given the short story in Germany an entirely new significance and status.

In trying to maintain an objective view of the short story throughout the research, and in order to preserve a balance of perspective, no attempt has been made to explore further the problematical or controversial aspects of short story development.

A psychologist would find much scope for research and possibly for dogmatic expression in the short story's representation of the problem of the disappearing ego, the loss of identity: in the Sekundenstil of the Naturalists, then the theories of the Impressionists, of Nietzsche, Thomas Mann and Musil, and finally the shorter, fragmentary, disjointed and episodic forms of expression which followed.

Equally, a sociologist would make much of the effect of conditions created by highly advanced industrialisation on an urban society in which - in the post-war period - the short story on the one hand could be presented as an essentially anti-ideological form, because it isolates characters in single situations, in individual problems, beliefs and relationships,

and because the characters themselves are not component parts of a larger unity; while on the other hand a systematic analysis of the grotesque, of 'sick' humour and of discontinuous prose writing could reveal an expression of the wide-felt dissatisfaction with political, economic or social establishment, which is apparent in unrest the world over.

To attempt such an investigation of these aspects of the modern short story would have been to create an imbalance. Any psychological or sociological study of the short story as a reflection of the time would necessarily have to be allied to a parallel investigation of drama and the stage, of radio, television and other media of expression and communication.

The short story itself is study enough. In all its guises it gives opportunity to the imaginative writer; in its skill and disciplines it presents a challenge; in its brevity it can have dramatic effect.

For Americans it has long been the subject of analytical study. Perhaps because the Americans have tended towards story-telling in their literature, in their ballads, in the episodic quality of their writing in general, the short story has proved itself an admirable vehicle for their talents.

The Germans helped to influence the development of the American short story; they have in turn been influenced by the Americans in developing their own. Now the short story has emerged in Germany, amid the tensions and pressures of modern life, as a form with a considerable role to play in giving expression, not only to the latest trends in extremism, but also to the enduring themes of all mankind.

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